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RULE 71: YOUR SMILE

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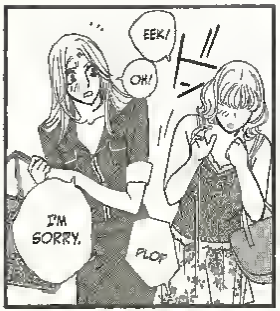

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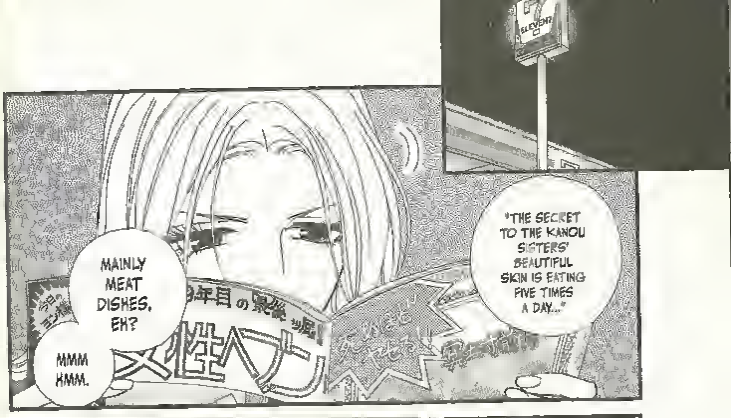

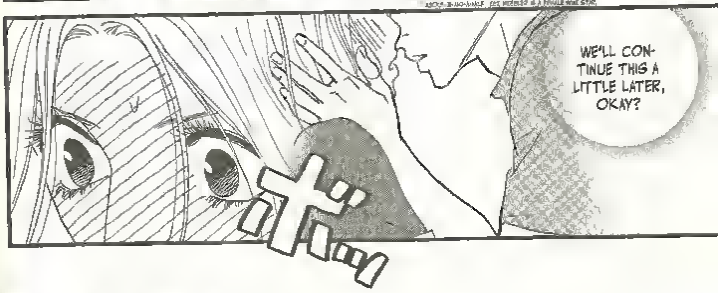

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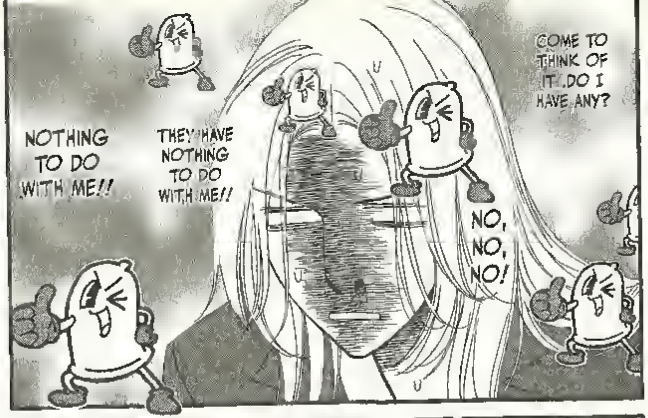
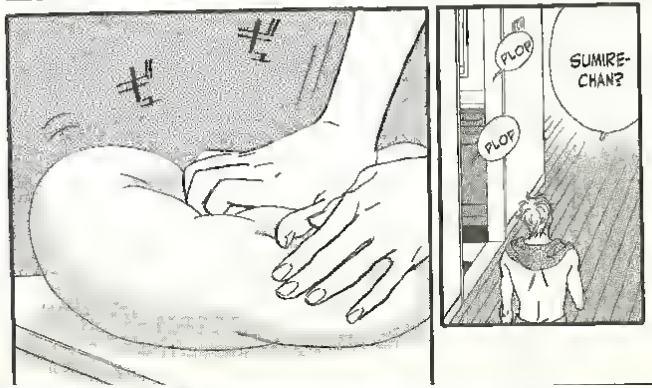
BREAD?
I THOUGHT FRESHLY BAKED BREAD WOULD BE GREAT FOR BREAKFAST, YOU KNOW
I HAVE TO LET THE YEAST ACTIVATE, SO..
...GO AHEAD AND GO TO SLEEP FIRST. ♡
WHAT'RE YOU DOING? ♡
OH, MOMO!
I'M MAKING BREAD RIGHT NOW. ♡
THAT'S OKAY, I'LL SLEEP ON THE PLANE ANYWAY.
WELL, DON'T WAIT UP FOR ME.
GOSH, I AM SO BUSY, I WON'T BE ABLE TO SLEEP FOR A WHILE.
IT'S TRUE THAT MAKING BREAD IS HARD WORK, ISN'T IT?
BUT I DON'T THINK YOU NEED A SWEATBAND FOR KNEADING IT.
AFTER ALL, THE BAKER'S THE FIRST ONE TO WAKE UP.
YEP, YEP, SO YOU GO AHEAD AND GO-





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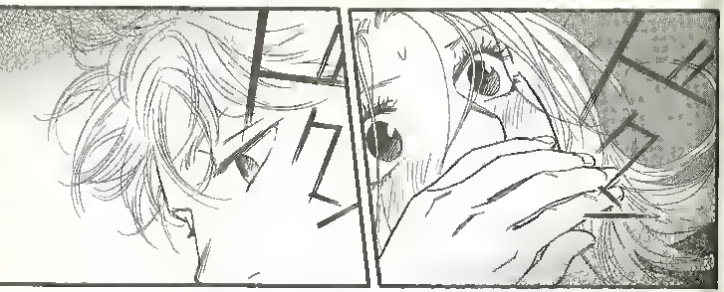

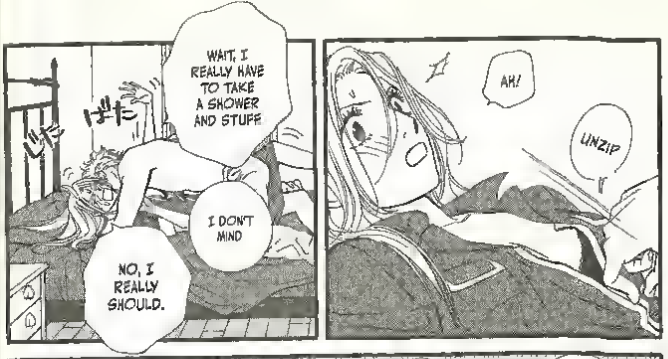

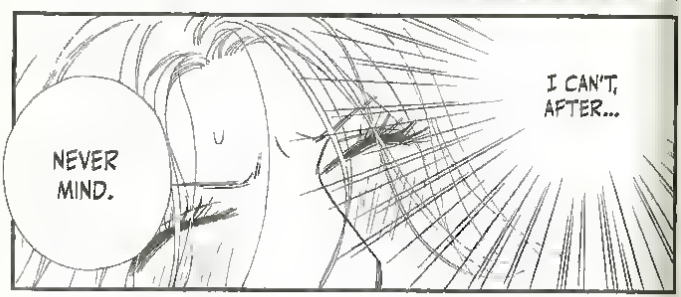

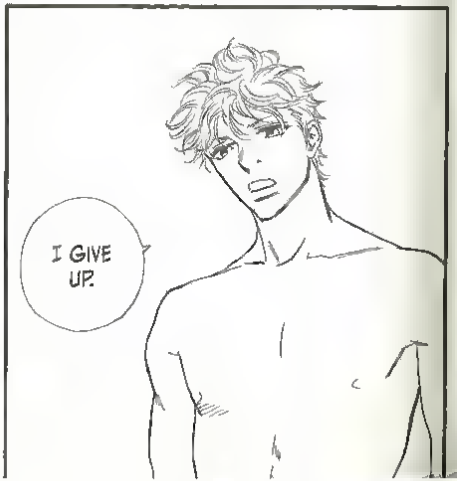

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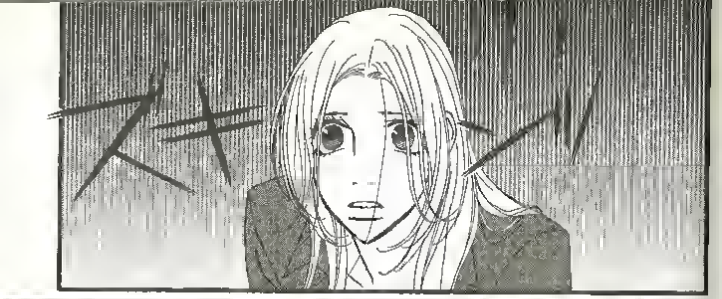
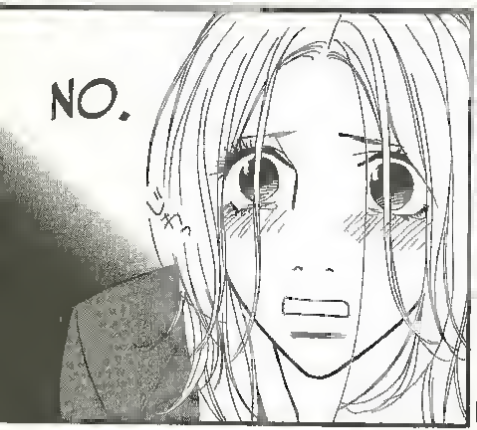
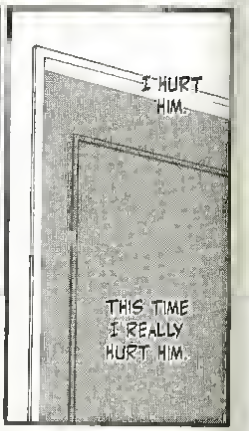
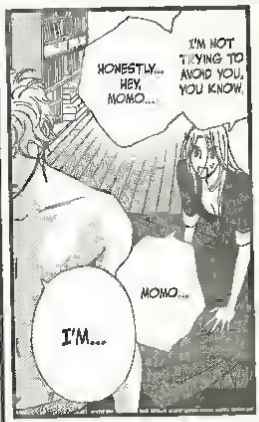






I THOUGHT PLAYING THAT KIND OF JERK WAS OKAY ONCE IN A WHILE, BUT...
I FEEL LIKE YOU KNOW, THE BAD GUY WHO TAKES ADVANTAGE OF YOU WHILE YOU'RE IN THE MIDDLE OF A BAD BREAKUP



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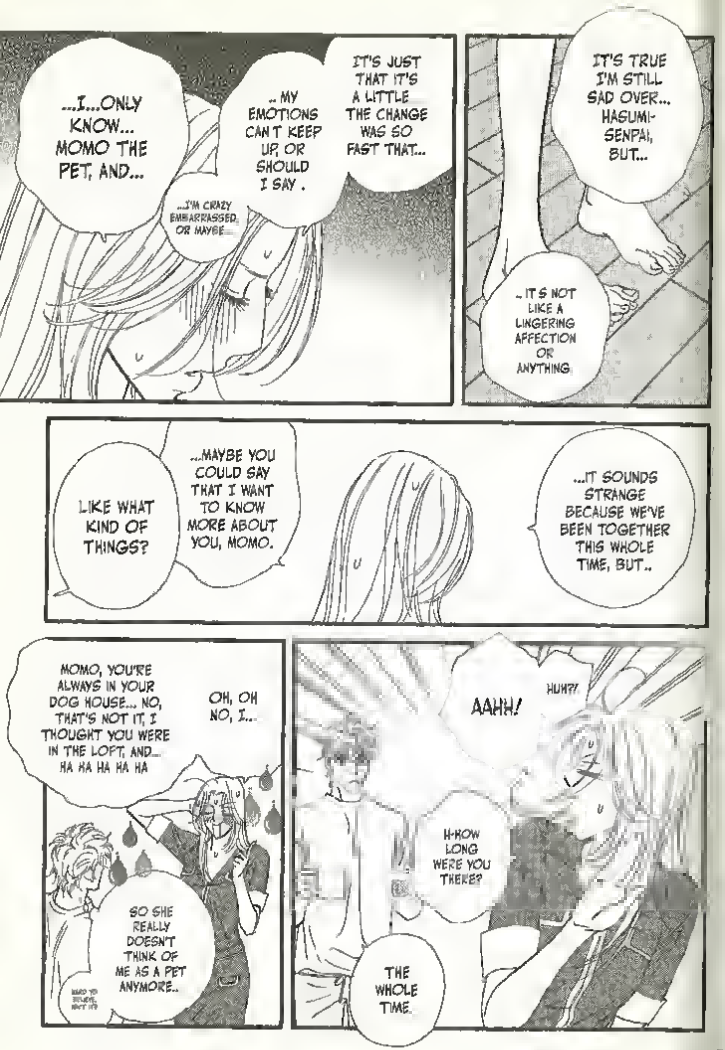
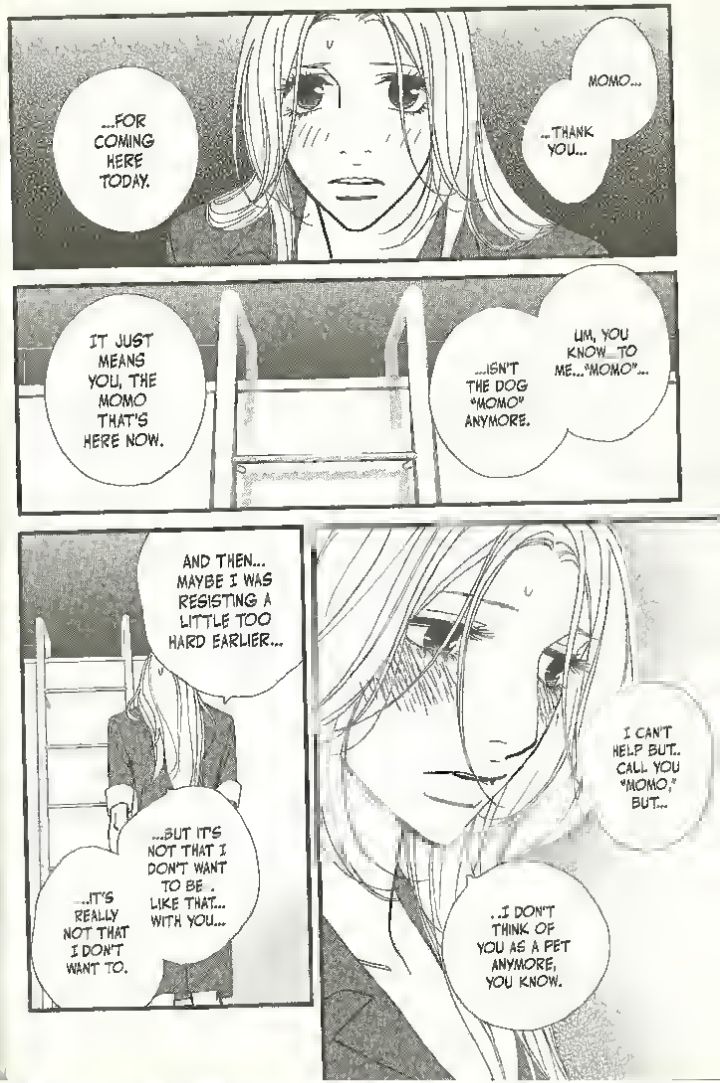

...I...ONLY KNOW... MOMO THE PET, AND...
...I'M CRAZY EMBARRASSED, OR MAYBE...
.. MY EMOTIONS CAN'T KEEP UP, OR SHOULD I SAY .
IT'S JUST THAT IT'S A LITTLE THE CHANGE WAS SO FAST THAT...
IT'S TRUE I'M STILL SAD OVER... HASUMI-SENPAI, BUT...
.. IT'S NOT LIKE A LINGERING AFFECTION OR ANYTHING.
LIKE WHAT KIND OF THINGS?
...MAYBE YOU COULD SAY THAT I WANT TO KNOW MORE ABOUT YOU, MOMO.
...IT SOUNDS STRANGE BECAUSE WE'VE BEEN TOGETHER THIS WHOLE TIME, BUT..
MOMO, YOU'RE ALWAYS IN YOUR DOG HOUSE... NO, THAT'S NOT IT, I THOUGHT YOU WERE IN THE LOFT, AND... HA HA HA HA HA
OH, OH NO, I...
SO SHE REALLY DOESN'T THINK OF ME AS A PET ANYMORE..
AAHH!
HUH??
H-HOW LONG WERE YOU THERE?
THE WHOLE TIME.


...FOR COMING HERE TODAY.
MOMO...
...THANK YOU...
IT JUST MEANS YOU, THE MOMO THAT'S HERE NOW.
...ISN'T THE DOG "MOMO" ANYMORE.
UM, YOU KNOW... TO ME... "MOMO"...
AND THEN... MAYBE I WAS RESISTING A LITTLE TOO HARD EARLIER...
...IT'S REALLY NOT THAT I DON'T WANT TO.
...BUT IT'S NOT THAT I DON'T WANT TO BE . LIKE THAT... WITH YOU...
I CAN'T HELP BUT.. CALL YOU "MOMO," BUT...
..I DON'T THINK OF YOU AS A PET ANYMORE, YOU KNOW.

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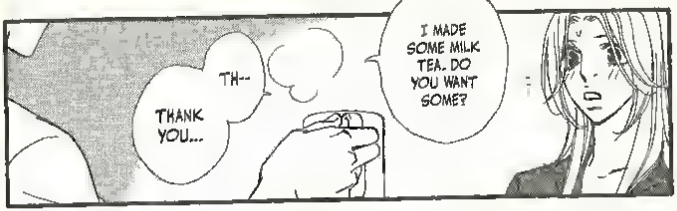
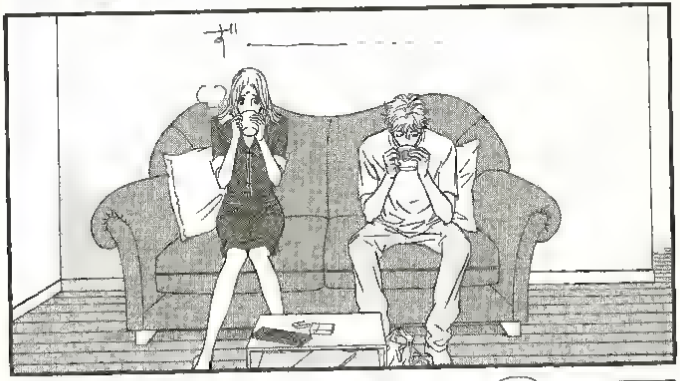
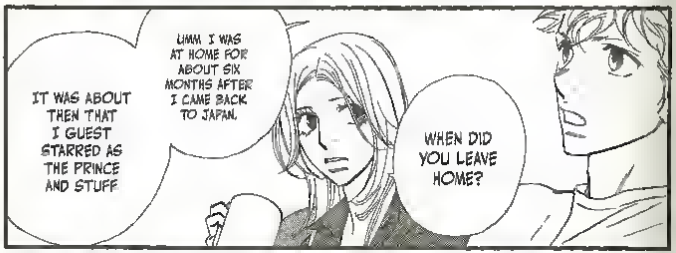
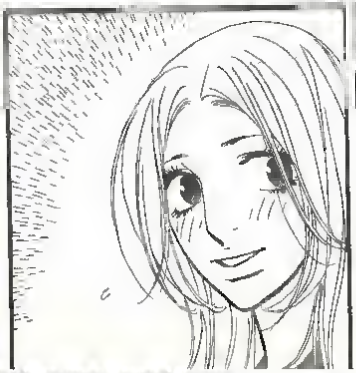
SO WHAT DID YOU DO?
TOOK SOME PILLS AND KNOCKED MYSELF OUT
WHOA, THAT'S DANGEROUS. YOU COULD HAVE DIED ALL OF A SUDDEN.
YEAH, PEOPLE TOLD ME AFTER THE FACT
...AND SO AT THE TIME, I COULDN'T EVEN TAKE THE SUBWAY.
BUT I HAD TO CATCH A 11 O'CLOCK PLANE REALLY SOON...






IT WAS ABOUT THEN THAT I GUEST STARRED AS THE PRINCE AND STUFF
UMM. I WAS AT HOME FOR ABOUT SIX MONTHS AFTER I CAME BACK TO JAPAN.
WHEN DID YOU LEAVE HOME?



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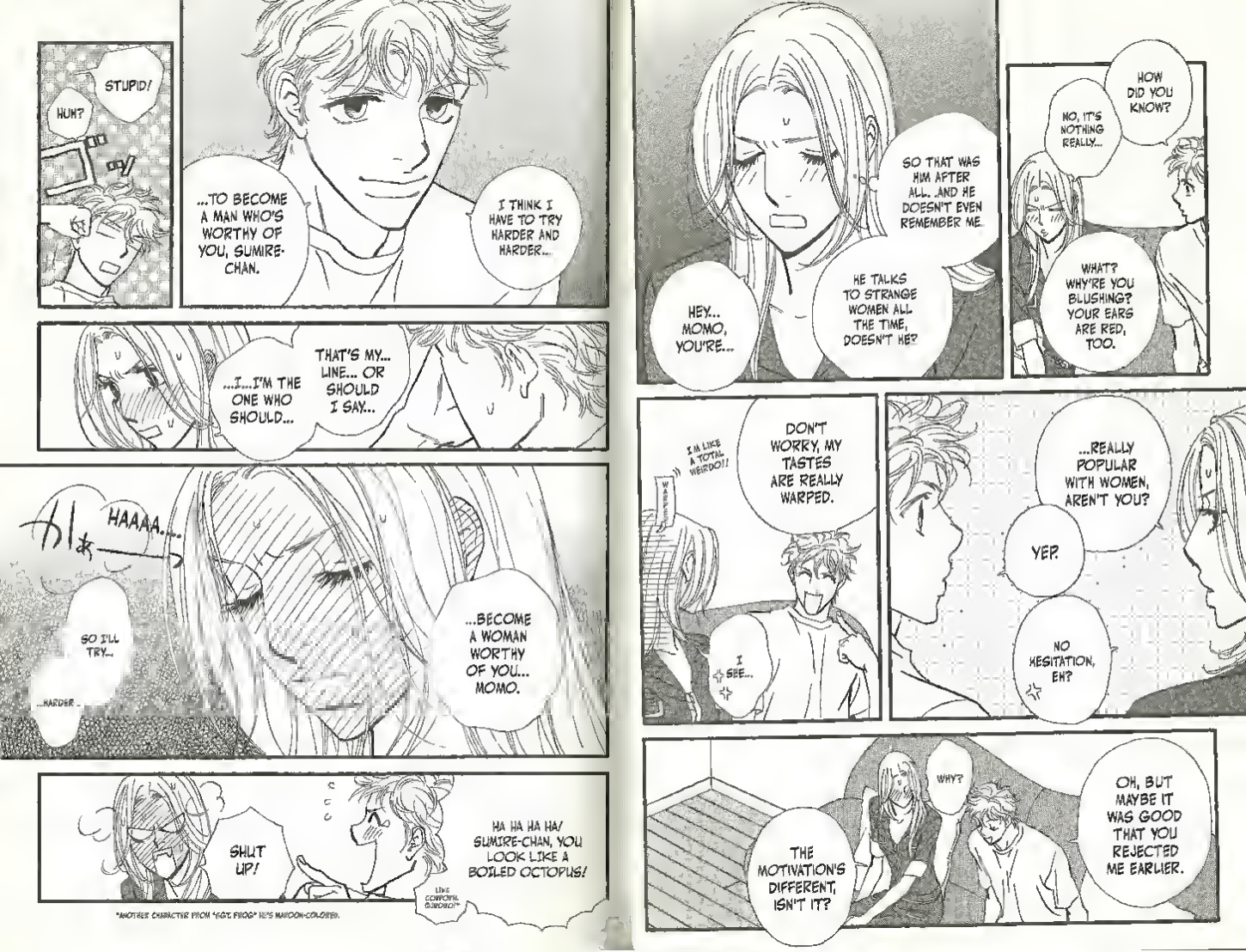
STUPID!
HUH?
...TO BECOME A MAN WHO'S WORTHY OF YOU, SUMIRE-CHAN.
I THINK I HAVE TO TRY HARDER AND HARDER...
HEY... MOMO, YOU'RE...
SO THAT WAS HIM AFTER ALL.. AND HE DOESN'T EVEN REMEMBER ME.
HE TALKS TO STRANGE WOMEN ALL THE TIME, DOESN'T HE?
HOW DID YOU KNOW?
NO, IT'S NOTHING REALLY...
WHAT? WHY'RE YOU BLUSHING? YOUR EARS ARE RED, TOO.
...I...I'M THE ONE WHO SHOULD...
THAT'S MY... LINE... OR SHOULD I SAY...
HAAAA...
SO I'LL TRY...
...HARDER...
...BECOME A WOMAN WORTHY OF YOU... MOMO.
I'M LIKE A TOTAL WEIRDO!!
WARPED
DON'T WORRY, MY TASTES ARE REALLY WARPED.
I SEE...
...REALLY POPULAR WITH WOMEN, AREN'T YOU?
YEP.
NO HESITATION, EH?
SHUT UP!
HA HA HA HA! SUMIRE-CHAN, YOU LOOK LIKE A BOILED OCTOPUS!
LIKE COMPOSITE GUARDIAN
WHY?
THE MOTIVATION'S DIFFERENT, ISN'T IT?
OH, BUT MAYBE IT WAS GOOD THAT YOU REJECTED ME EARLIER.

*ANOTHER CHARACTER FROM "HOT FROG" HE'S MAROON-COLORED.

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...MOMO.
IN THAT CASE, I THINK I'LL CALL YOU...
TA-DA!
WELCOME TO BISTRO MOMO!
SHUT UP.
MMM. FEELS GOOD.
ASK ME WHERE MY MAGIC ITCHY SPOT IS.
STOP IT!
THAT'S NOT THE MOMO I KNOW.
YOU'RE RIGHT...
IT'S STARTING TO GET LIGHT OUT.
HEY, MAYBE YOU SHOULD TRY TO SLEEP A LITTLE.
OH.
JUST FOR A LITTLE BIT...
THEN I'LL DO IT JUST LIKE THIS.

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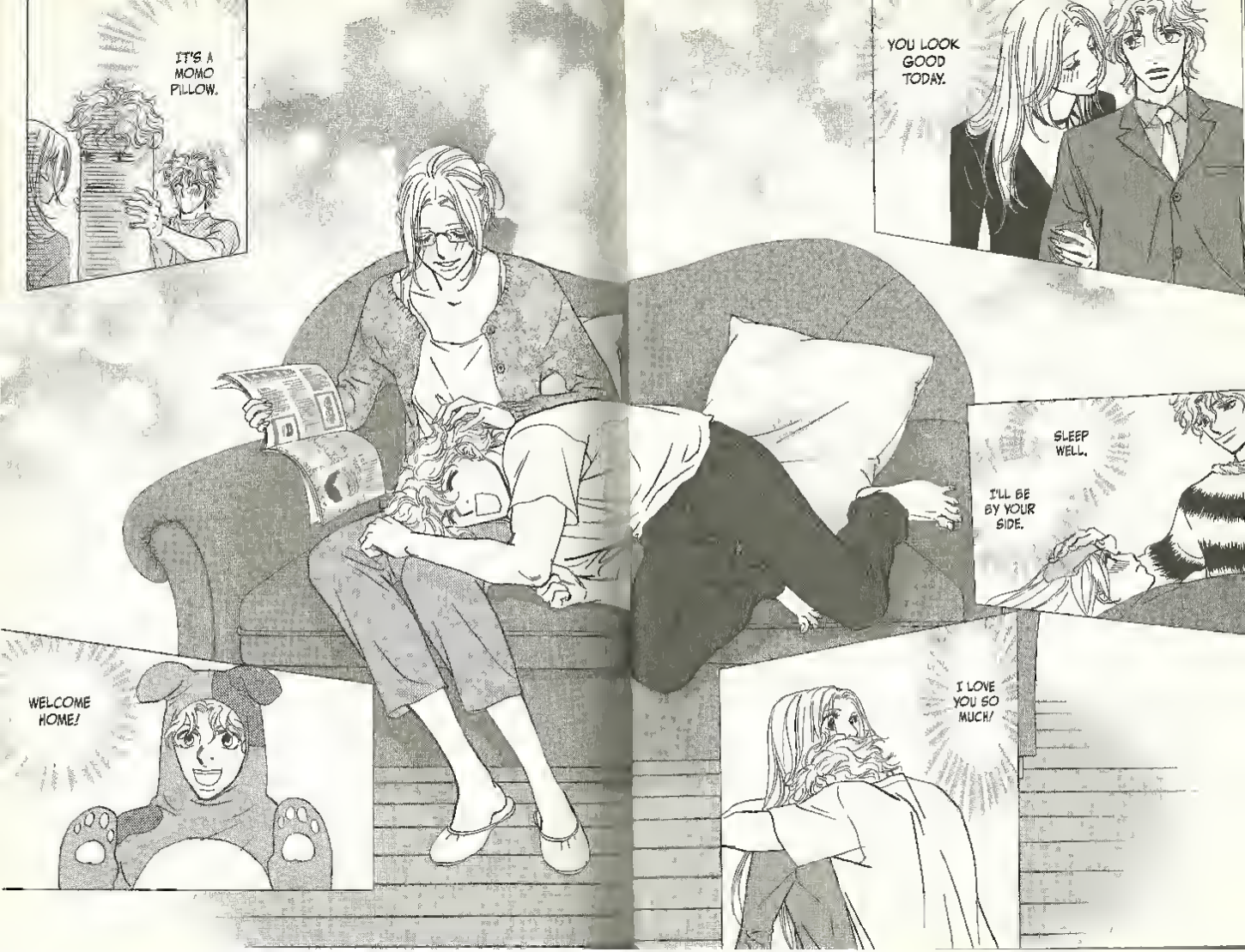

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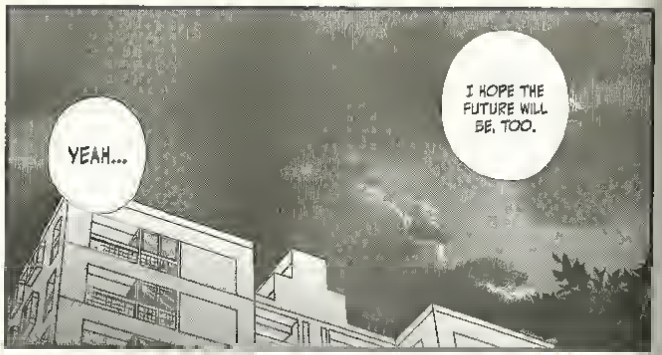

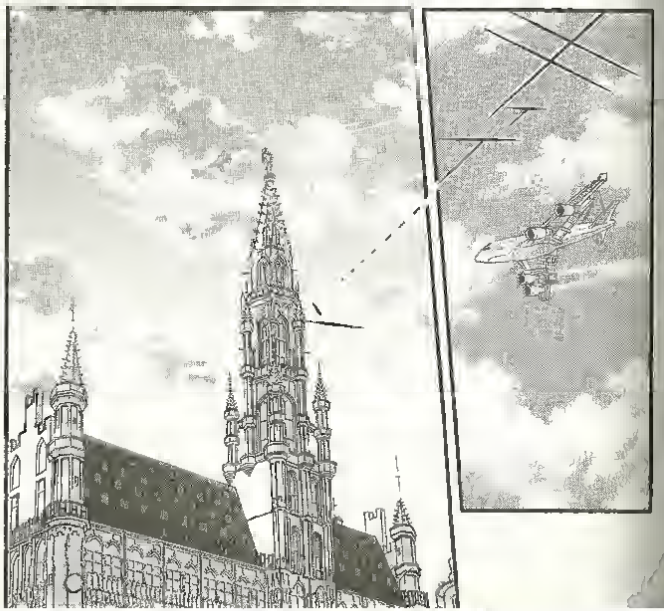

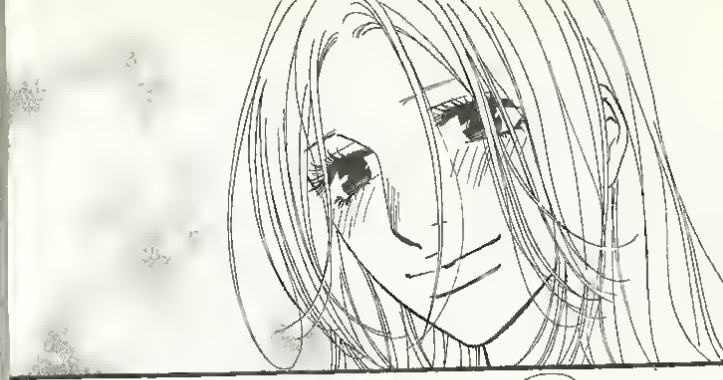

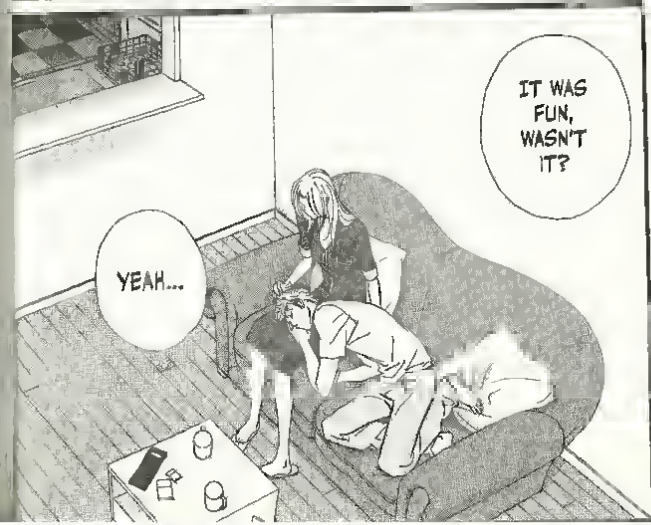

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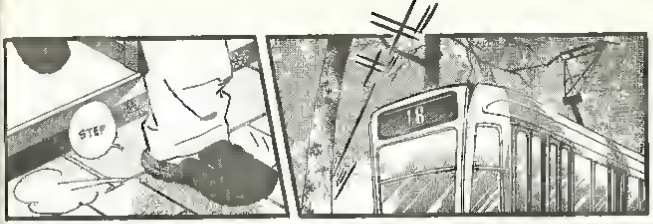
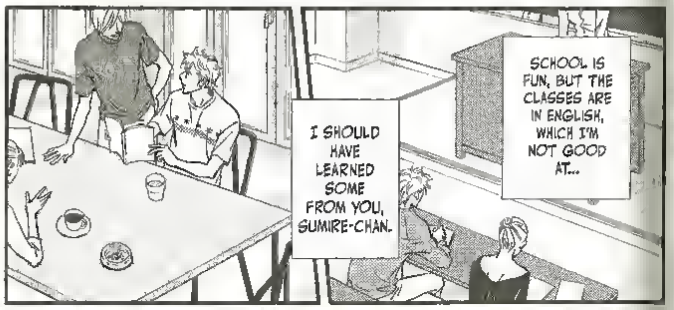
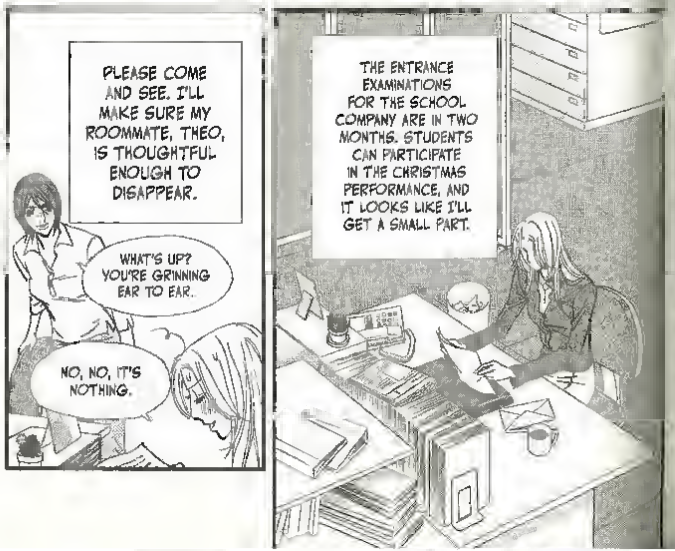
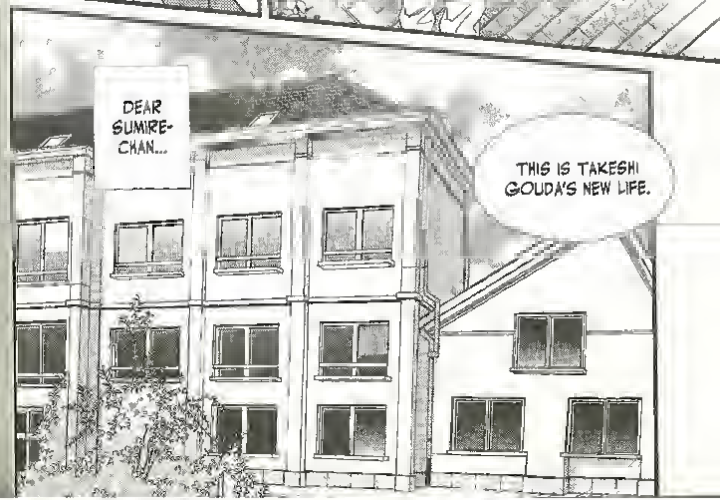





PLEASE COME AND SEE. I'LL MAKE SURE MY ROOMMATE, THEO, IS THOUGHTFUL ENOUGH TO DISAPPEAR.
WHAT'S UP? YOU'RE GRINNING EAR TO EAR.
NO, NO, IT'S NOTHING.
THE ENTRANCE EXAMINATIONS FOR THE SCHOOL COMPANY ARE IN TWO MONTHS. STUDENTS CAN PARTICIPATE IN THE CHRISTMAS PERFORMANCE, AND IT LOOKS LIKE I'LL GET A SMALL PART.



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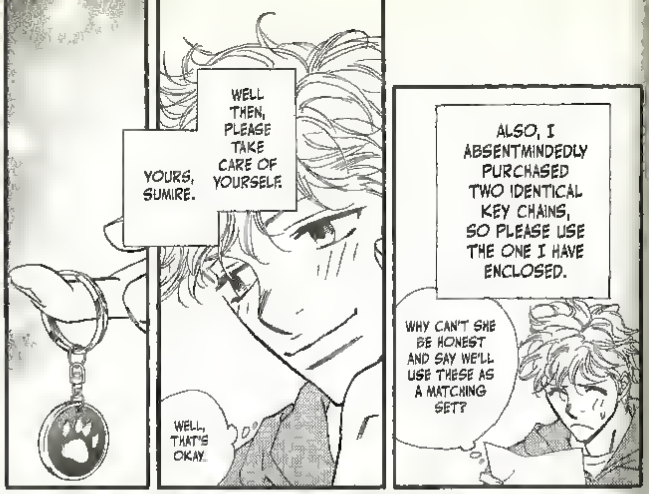
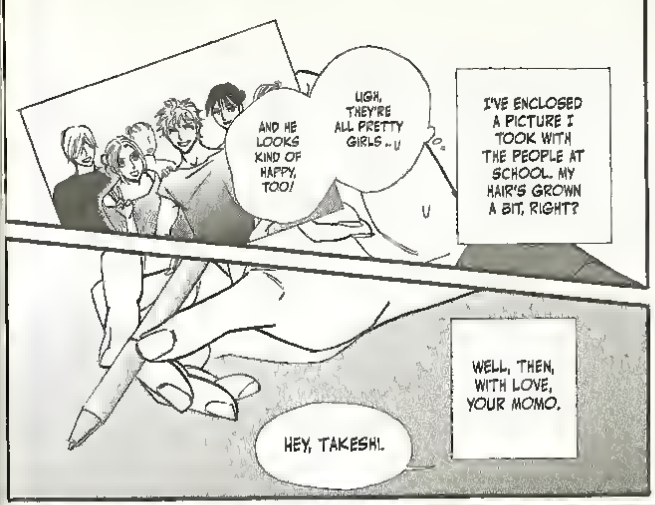

WELL THEN, PLEASE TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF.
YOURS, SUMIRE.
WELL, THAT'S OKAY.
ALSO, I ABSENTMINDEDLY PURCHASED TWO IDENTICAL KEY CHAINS, SO PLEASE USE THE ONE I HAVE ENCLOSED.
WHY CAN'T SHE BE HONEST AND SAY WE'LL USE THESE AS A MATCHING SET?


UGH, THEY'RE ALL PRETTY GIRLS ~U
AND HE LOOKS KIND OF HAPPY, TOO!
I'VE ENCLOSED A PICTURE I TOOK WITH THE PEOPLE AT SCHOOL. MY HAIR'S GROWN A BIT, RIGHT?
WELL, THEN, WITH LOVE, YOUR MOMO.
HEY, TAKESHI.

DEAR MOMO.
I COULD NOT GIVE YOU A PROPER FAREWELL GIFT, SO I WILL SEND YOU THIS.*
PWA-HA!
SUMIRE-CHAN'S HANDWRITING LOOKS KINDA OLD LADY-ISH!

*LIKE MOST FIRST JAPANESE PEOPLE, SUMIRE'S WRITING STYLE IS VERY FORMAL.

*ONLY OLD MEN AND SOME JAPANESE MOBSTERS WEAR STOMACH WARMERS (HARAMAKI). THEY ARE UNFASHIONABLE.

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RULE 72: GUARDIAN

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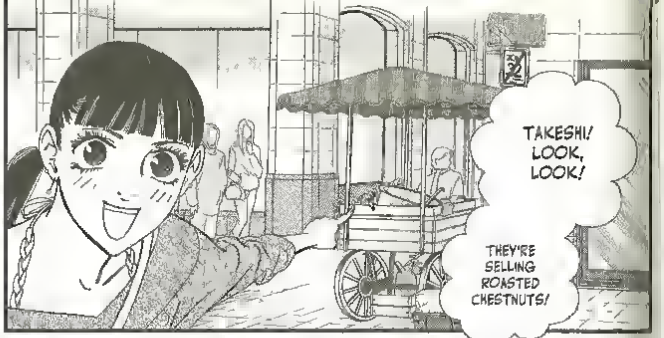

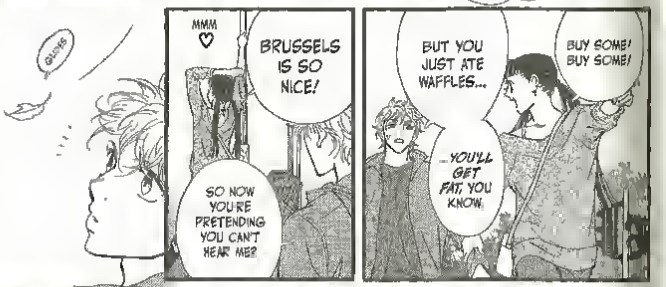
GLOVE
MMM ♡
BRUSSELS IS SO NICE!
SO NOW YOU'RE PRETENDING YOU CAN'T HEAR ME?
BUT YOU JUST ATE WAFFLES...
BUY SOME! BUY SOME!
...YOU'LL GET FAT, YOU KNOW.

SUKENARI COMMENTARY! MINI-REPORT ON BELGIUM.

THE KINGDOM OF BELGIUM--ITS OFFICIAL NAME--IS A LITTLE SMALLER THAN KYUSHU.* IT'S A COUNTRY FOR GOURMETS, WITH MUSSELS, BELGIAN BEER AND, DON'T FORGET, BELGIAN CHOCOLATE. BRUSSELS, WHERE THE TWO CHARACTERS ARE RIGHT NOW, IS THE CAPITOL. IT IS ABOUT 40 MINUTES BY EXPRESS TRAIN FROM BRUSSELS TO ANTWERP WHERE RUMI LIVES. BY THE WAY, THE WAVY-HAIRED MAN ABOVE IS THAT ALIEN WHO CAME TO TAKE IWAYA-SAN BACK, ISN'T HE? WHY IS HE IN BRUSSELS?

*ABOUT THE SIZE OF MARYLAND.

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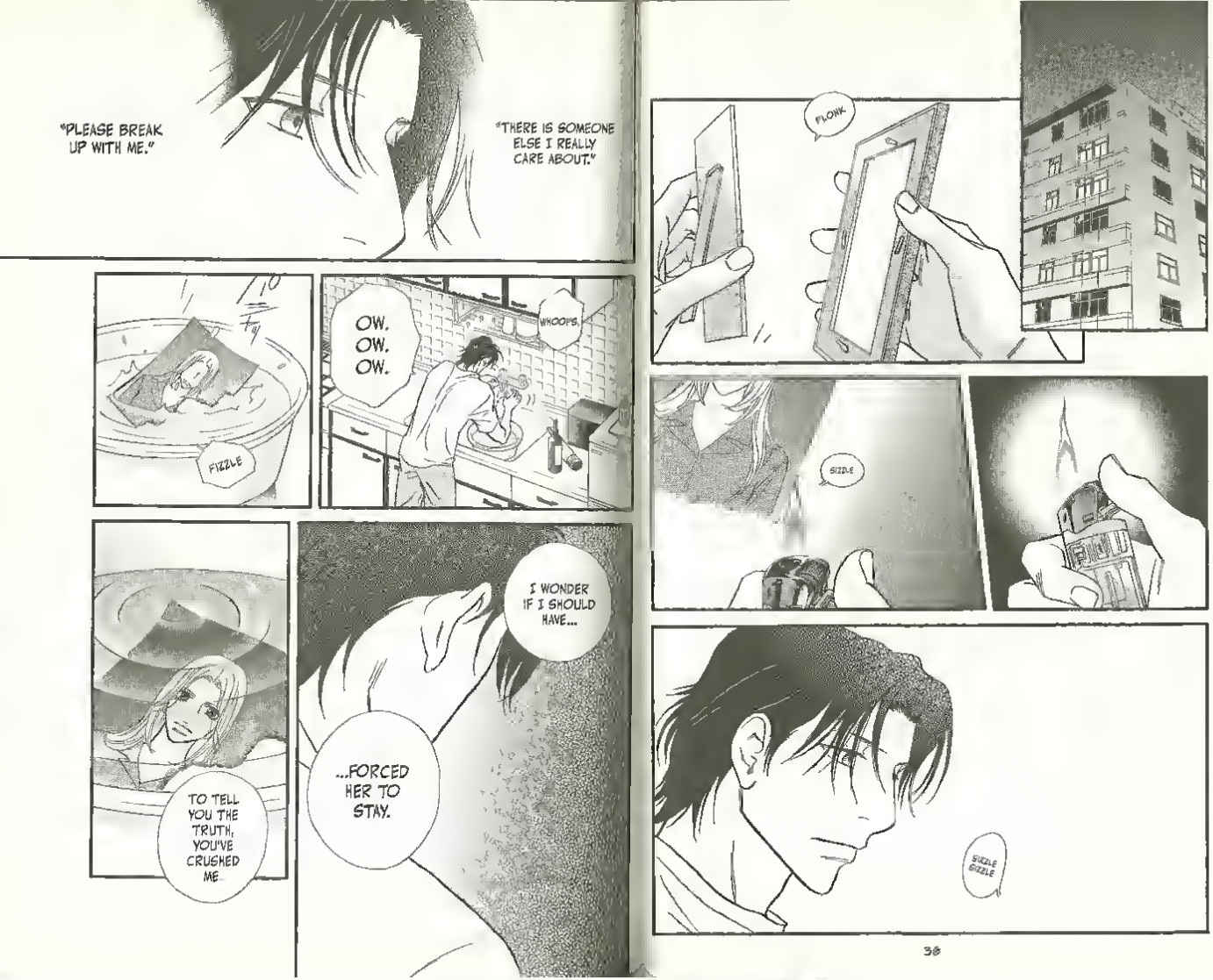

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COME TO THINK OF IT, YOUR HAIR LOOKS A BIT MESSY, TOO
THAT'S STRANGE. YOU'RE USUALLY THE GUY WHO ALWAYS LOOKS COOL AND HAS HIS NECKTIE TIED ALL NICE AND PROPER.
DID I GUESS RIGHT?
ARE YOU TRYING TO CHANGE YOUR LOOK?
...COULD BE SO HARD?
WHO WOULD HAVE THOUGHT THAT LOSING YOU...
I'M BUSY.
...COULD YOU PLEASE BE QUIET?
SHE'S WEARING ANOTHER AMAZING SKIRT TODAY~
OH YEAH, DID YOU SEE THE NEW GIRL WHO JUST CAME TO THE SATELLITE EDITION?
I'M SORRY, BUT...
HUH?
I'M SORRY...
YEAH.
HAS HE REALLY LOST IT?
IT'S A SAUNA OUTSIDE! REALLY!
PHEW! IT MAKES YOU FEEL ALIVE, DOESN'T IT?

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THEN, I'LL BE GOING NOW...
PLEASE HAVE SOME COFFEE OR SOMETHING BEFORE YOU GOO..
OH! WAIT! PLEASE COME IN!
SOORRY YOU HAD TO SEE ME HOME.
I HAD SO MUCH FUN, I DRANK TOO MUUCH.
.. THIS IS THE DATA WE'D BORROWEED
OH... THANKS.
EXCUUSE MEE.
I'M FROM THE SATELLITE EDITION, AAAAND ..
TO BE HONEST ,I JUST BROKE UP WITH MY BOYFRIEND AND...
I'M SO LOONEELY...
LIUMM, IS IT TRUE THAT YOU NEVER GO WHEN PEOPLE ASK YOU OUT FOR A DRINK?
WHAT?
NOT REALLY..
...
I'M A NEWBIE, SO I'D LIKE TO HAVE YOU TEACH ME THIS AND THAAT
THEEN, HOW ABOUT GOING FOR A DRINK WITH ME TONIGHT?

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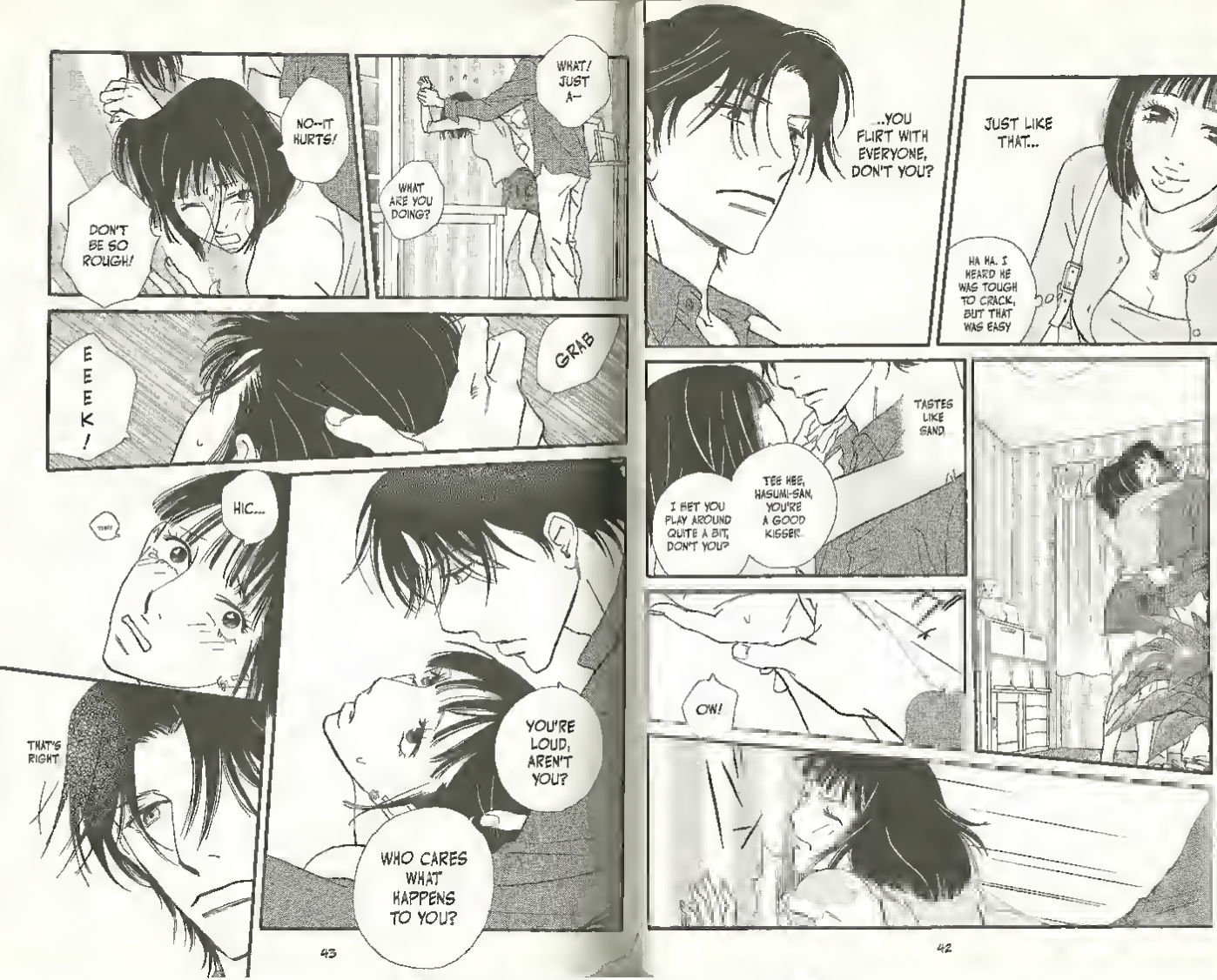
...YOU FLIRT WITH EVERYONE, DON'T YOU?
JUST LIKE THAT...
HA HA. I HEARD HE WAS TOUGH TO CRACK, BUT THAT WAS EASY
TASTES LIKE SAND
I BET YOU PLAY AROUND QUITE A BIT, DON'T YOU?
TEE HEE, HASUMI-SAN, YOU'RE A GOOD KISSER.
OW!
WHAT! JUST A-
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
NO--IT HURTS!
DON'T BE SO ROUGH!
GRAB
EEEK!
HIC...
YOU'RE LOUD, AREN'T YOU?
WHO CARES WHAT HAPPENS TO YOU?
THAT'S RIGHT

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SHE'S IN THE HOSPITAL, SO SHE MUST BE ALL RIGHT... RIGHT..
I LEFT HER ALL ALONE, BECAUSE I KNEW I'D LOSE CONTROL IF I SAW HER FACE.
WHAT AM I DOING?
IT'S NOT UNUSUAL FOR SOMEONE WHO'S BEEN BROUGHT HERE FOR A DRUG ADDICTION TO SIMPLY DISAPPEAR, YOU KNOW.
SOMETIMES THEY'RE AFRAID THEY CAN'T PAY THE HOSPITAL BILLS, OR IN THE CASE OF FOREIGNERS, THEY'RE AFRAID OF BEING DEPORTED.
SHE DISAPPEARED?
YOU, HER HUSBAND, DIDN'T VISIT HER FOR A WHILE, SO I THOUGHT YOU RAN AWAY TOGETHER...
FOR YOUR GIRLFRIEND?
NO...I'M VISITING SOMEONE IN THE HOSPITAL.
HERE YOU GO.
THANK YOU.

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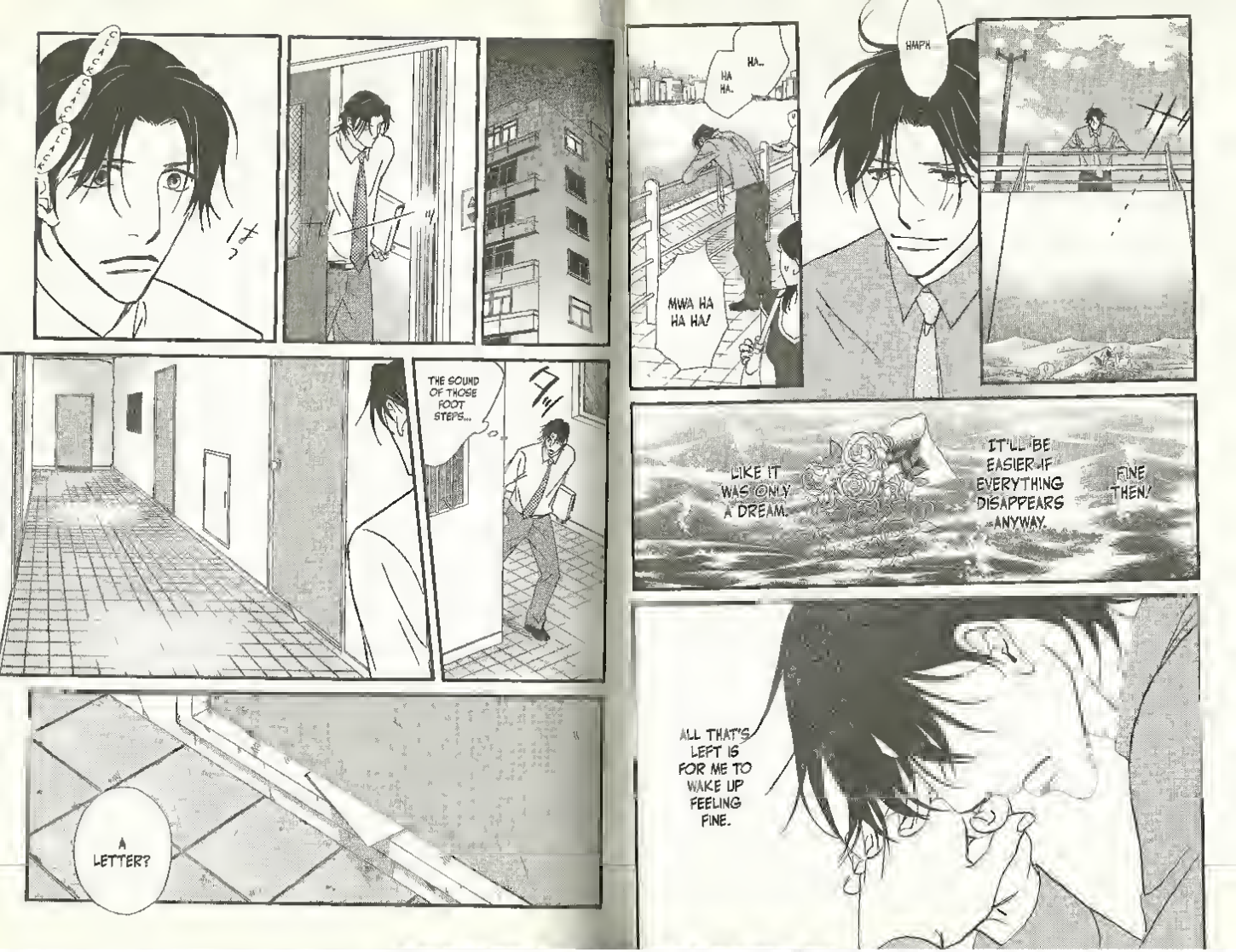
HA..
HA HA.
MWA HA HA HA!
HMPH
THE SOUND OF THOSE FOOT STEPS...
LIKE IT WAS ONLY A DREAM.
IT'LL BE EASIER IF EVERYTHING DISAPPEARS ANYWAY.
FINE THEN!
A LETTER?
ALL THAT'S LEFT IS FOR ME TO WAKE UP FEELING FINE.

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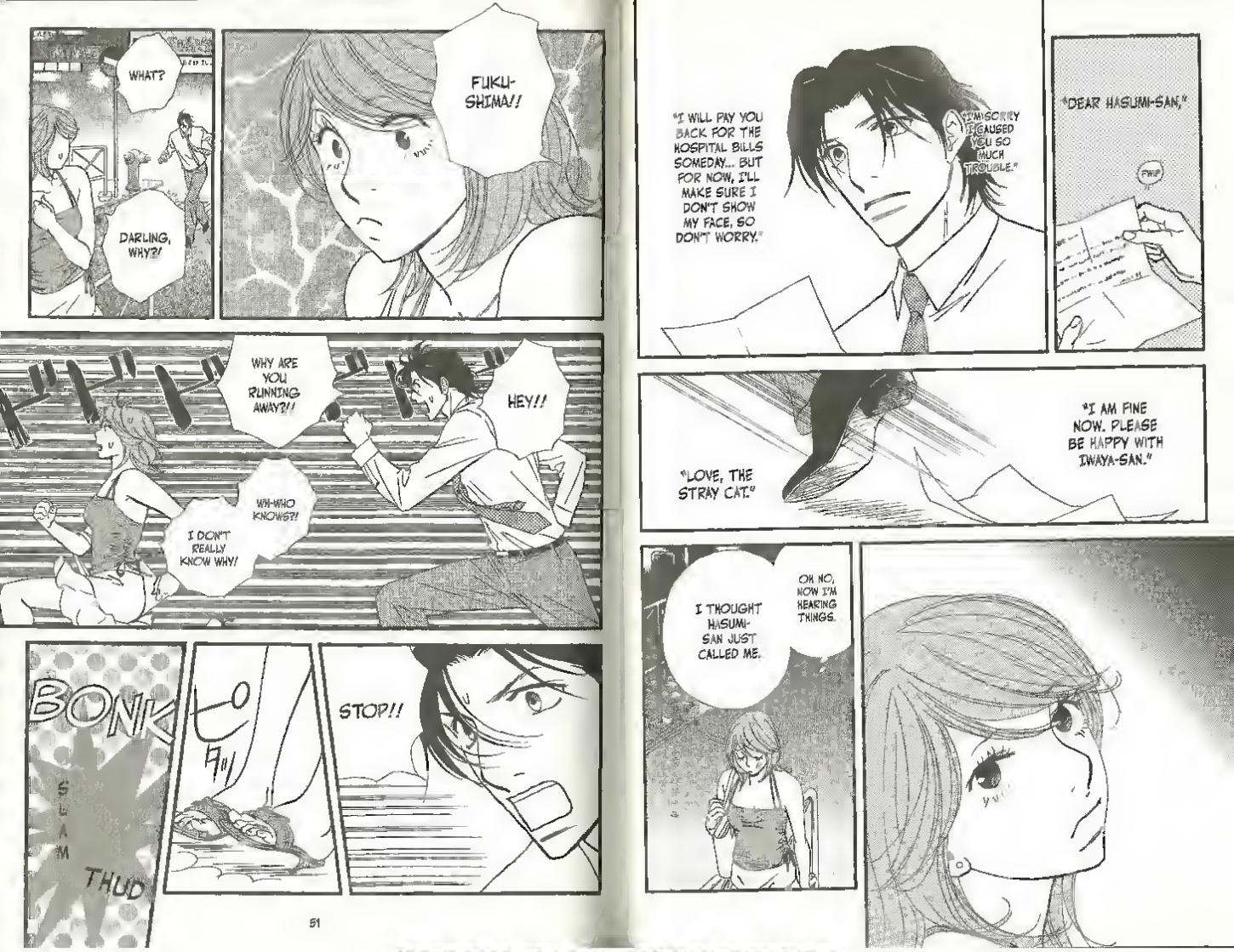
WHAT?
DARLING, WHY?!
FUKU-SHIMA!!
WHY ARE YOU RUNNING AWAY?!
HEY!!
I DON'T REALLY KNOW WHY!
WH-WHO KNOWS?!
BONK
SLAM
THUD
STOP!!
"I WILL PAY YOU BACK FOR THE HOSPITAL BILLS SOMEDAY... BUT FOR NOW, I'LL MAKE SURE I DON'T SHOW MY FACE, SO DON'T WORRY."
"I'M SORRY I CAUSED YOU SO MUCH TROUBLE."
"DEAR HASUMI-SAN,"
FWIP
"LOVE, THE STRAY CAT."
"I AM FINE NOW. PLEASE BE HAPPY WITH IWAYA-SAN."
I THOUGHT HASUMI-SAN JUST CALLED ME.
OH NO, NOW I'M HEARING THINGS.

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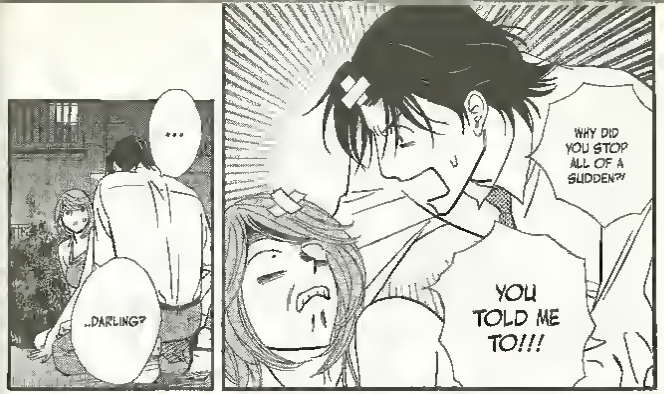
I'M LONELY...
...ENOUGH TO DIE...
SO LONELY...
WHEN I'M ALONE...
...I THINK, MAYBE I SHOULD HAVE DONE THIS LONG AGO...
...OR I WONDER WHY IT TURNED OUT LIKE THIS I REGRET THINGS...
...AND IT HURTS
SO LONELY...



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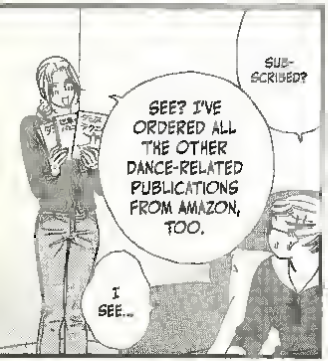

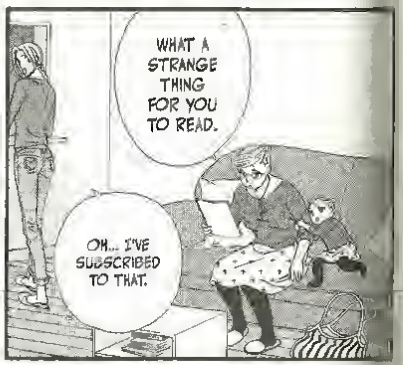

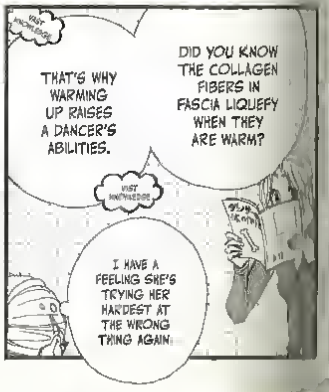
DID YOU KNOW THE COLLAGEN FIBERS IN FASCIA LIQUEFY WHEN THEY ARE WARM?
THAT'S WHY WARMING UP RAISES A DANCER'S ABILITIES.
I HAVE A FEELING SHE'S TRYING HER HARDEST AT THE WRONG THING AGAIN.

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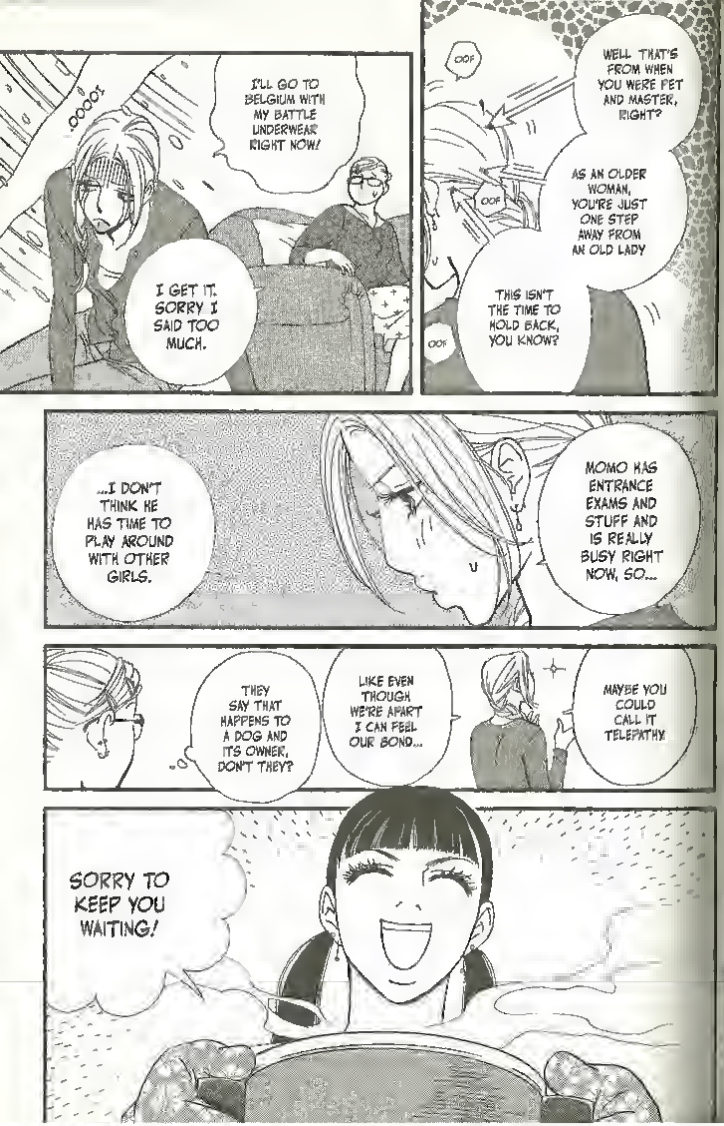
I'LL GO TO BELGIUM WITH MY BATTLE UNDERWEAR RIGHT NOW!
OOOO!
I GET IT. SORRY I SAID TOO MUCH.
WELL THAT'S FROM WHEN YOU WERE FET AND MASTEK, RIGHT?
OOF
OOF
OOF
AS AN OLDER WOMAN, YOU'RE JUST ONE STEP AWAY FROM AN OLD LADY
THIS ISN'T THE TIME TO HOLD BACK, YOU KNOW?
...I DON'T THINK HE HAS TIME TO PLAY AROUND WITH OTHER GIRLS.
MOMO HAS ENTRANCE EXAMS AND STUFF AND IS REALLY BUSY RIGHT NOW, SO...
THEY SAY THAT HAPPENS TO A DOG AND ITS OWNER, DON'T THEY?
LIKE EVEN THOUGH WE'RE APART I CAN FEEL OUR BOND...
MAYBE YOU COULD CALL IT TELEPATHY
SORRY TO KEEP YOU WAITING!
WELL... THAT IS...
HOW WAS WHAT?
YOU HAVE TO ASK?
YOU SEALED THE DEAL, DIDN'T YOU? AT LEAST ONCE BEFORE HE LEFT?
AND THERE ARE LOT OF BEAUTIFUL YOUNG GIRLS (AND BOYS) THERE, AREN'T THERE?
I DON'T KNOW. THIS TIME IT'S REALLY A LONG-DISTANCE RELATIONSHIP.
I... HIT'S OKAY.
IT'LL GET LONG IF I EXPLAIN, BUT... BASICALLY...
THAT'S FINE. YOUR EXPLANATIONS ARE USUALLY LONG.
BUT BASICALLY, YOU DIDN'T DO IT, DID YOU?
...HAVE A WEAK RELATIONSHIP THAT WILL BREAK SO EASILY.
WE DON'T...

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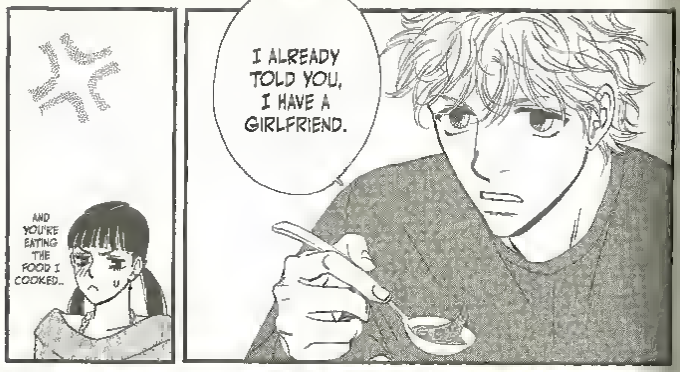
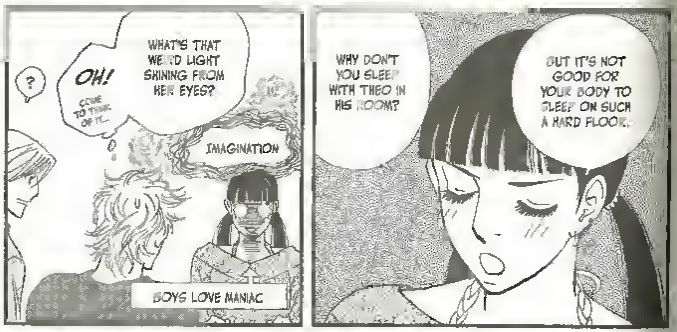
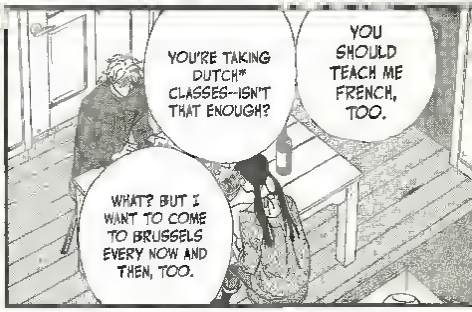



OH!
COME TO THINK OF IT...
WHAT'S THAT WEIRD LIGHT SHINING FROM HER EYES?
IMAGINATION
BOYS LOVE MANIAC
WHY DON'T YOU SLEEP WITH THEO IN HIS ROOM?
BUT IT'S NOT GOOD FOR YOUR BODY TO SLEEP ON SUCH A HARD FLOOR.


YOU'RE TAKING DUTCH* CLASSES--ISN'T THAT ENOUGH?
YOU SHOULD TEACH ME FRENCH, TOO.
WHAT? BUT I WANT TO COME TO BRUSSELS EVERY NOW AND THEN, TOO.

*LET'S EXPLAIN! IN BELGIUM, FRENCH, DUTCH (FLEMISH) AND GERMAN ARE ALL USED PUBLICLY. IN BRUSSELS, WHERE MOMO IS, FRENCH IS THE MOST COMMON AND IN ANTWERP, WHERE RUMI IS, IT'S DUTCH.

I'M NOT OKAY WITH THAT.
THAT'S OKAY, WE CAN JUST SLEEP TOGETHER (CLOSE TOGETHER!)
I'LL LEND YOU MY BED. I'LL SLEEP HERE IN THE KITCHEN.

THEO IS LEFT-HANDED

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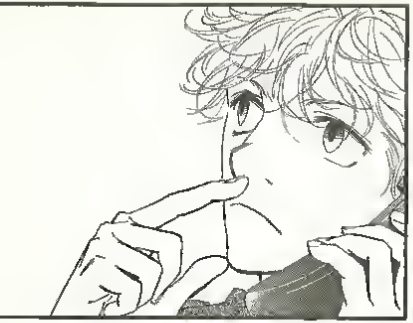

THE TONE OF HER VOICE IS SLIGHTLY, ..
...MORE SEXY, ISN'T IT?
I'M WELL... JUST A LITTLE LONELY...
OH, WAIT! THERE WAS A TYPHOON ON THE WEEKEND AND...

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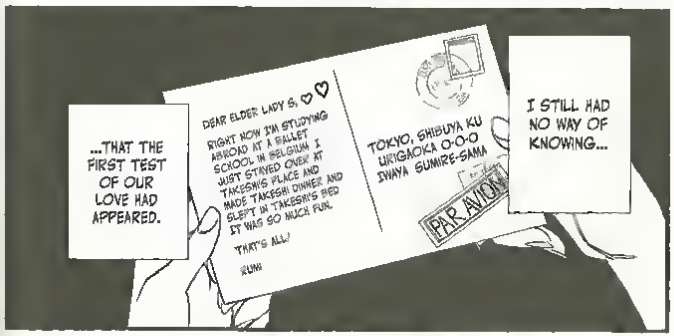
A FEW DAYS LATER...


...THAT THE FIRST TEST OF OUR LOVE HAD APPEARED.
DEAR ELDER LADY S,
RIGHT NOW I'M STUDYING ABROAD AT A BALLET SCHOOL IN BELGIUM. I JUST STAYED OVER AT TAKESHI'S PLACE AND MADE TAKESHI DINNER AND SLEPT IN TAKESHI'S BED IT WAS SO MUCH FUN.
THAT'S ALL!
JUNI
TOKYO, SHIBUYA KU URIGAOKA 0-0-0 IWAYA SUMIRE-SAMA
PAR AVION
I STILL HAD NO WAY OF KNOWING...

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RULE 73: THE HEART OF LOVE

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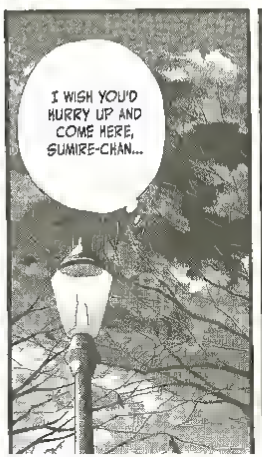

AND THEN WE'D HOLD HANDS AND WALK IN FRONT OF THE ROYAL PALACE AND ..
...SHOW OFF IN FRONT OF THE SOLDIERS IN THE STREET.
I WONDER IF SHE'LL WANT TO SEE THE MANNEKEN PIS

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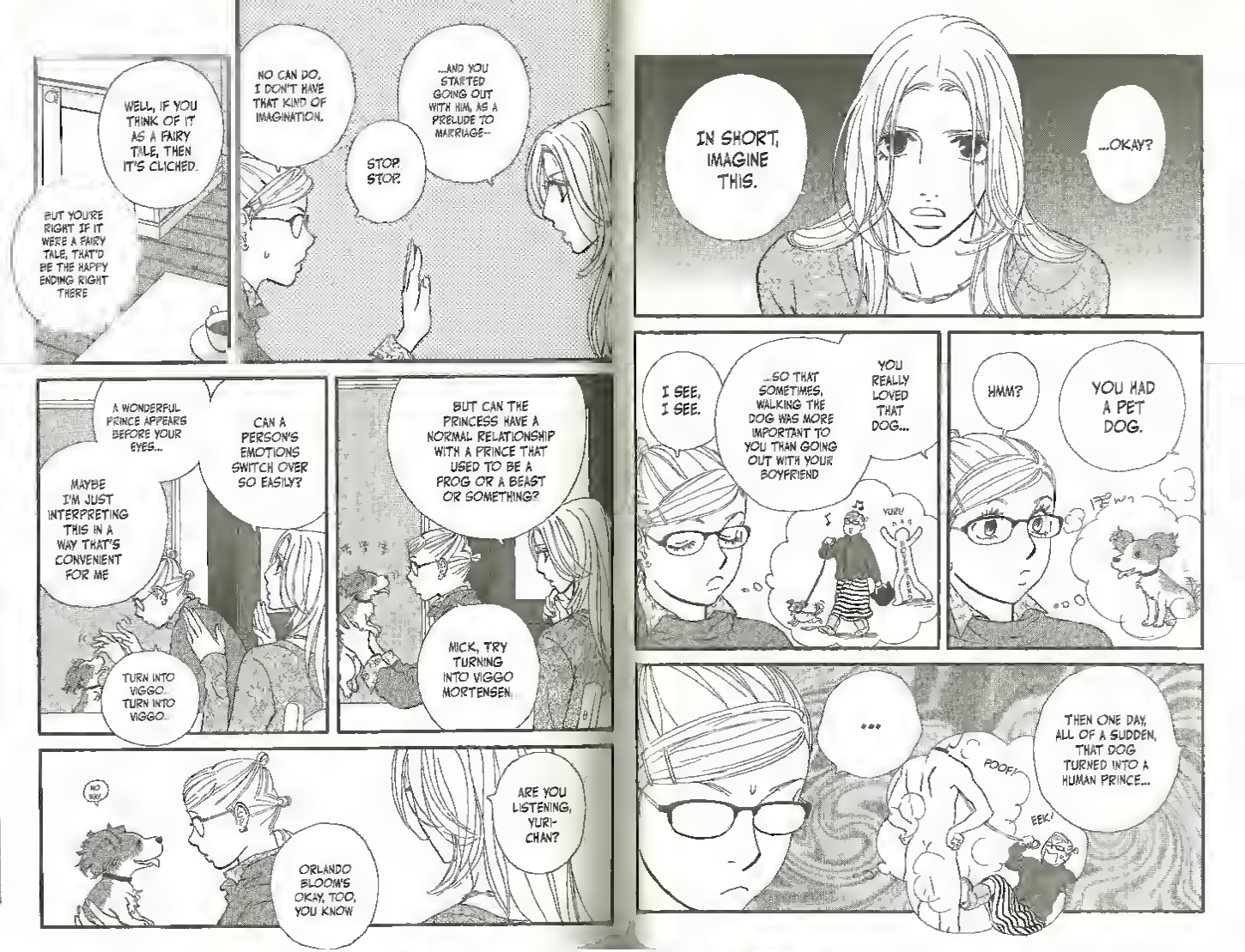
WELL, IF YOU THINK OF IT AS A FAIRY TALE, THEN IT'S CLICHED.
BUT YOU'RE RIGHT IF IT WERE A FAIRY TALE, THAT'D BE THE HAPPY ENDING RIGHT THERE
NO CAN DO. I DON'T HAVE THAT KIND OF IMAGINATION.
STOP. STOP.
...AND YOU STARTED GOING OUT WITH HIM, AS A PRELUDE TO MARRIAGE--
IN SHORT, IMAGINE THIS.
...OKAY?
I SEE, I SEE.
...SO THAT SOMETIMES, WALKING THE DOG WAS MORE IMPORTANT TO YOU THAN GOING OUT WITH YOUR BOYFRIEND
YOU REALLY LOVED THAT DOG...
YURU
HMM?
YOU HAD A PET DOG.
A WONDERFUL PRINCE APPEARS BEFORE YOUR EYES...
CAN A PERSON'S EMOTIONS SWITCH OVER SO EASILY?
MAYBE I'M JUST INTERPRETING THIS IN A WAY THAT'S CONVENIENT FOR ME
TURN INTO VIGGO... TURN INTO VIGGO...
BUT CAN THE PRINCESS HAVE A NORMAL RELATIONSHIP WITH A PRINCE THAT USED TO BE A FROG OR A BEAST OR SOMETHING?
MICK, TRY TURNING INTO VIGGO MORTENSEN.
...
POOF!
EEK!
THEN ONE DAY, ALL OF A SUDDEN, THAT DOG TURNED INTO A HUMAN PRINCE...
NO WAY.
ORLANDO BLOOM'S OKAY, TOO, YOU KNOW
ARE YOU LISTENING, YURI-CHAN?

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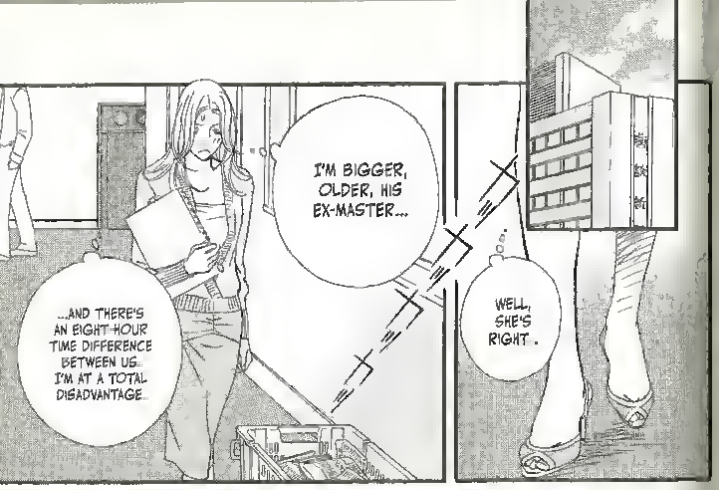
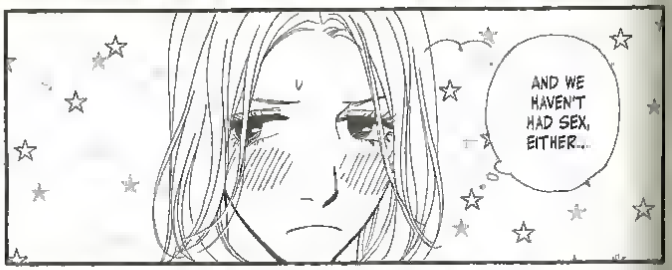
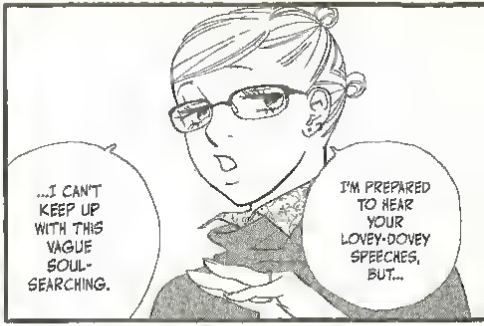
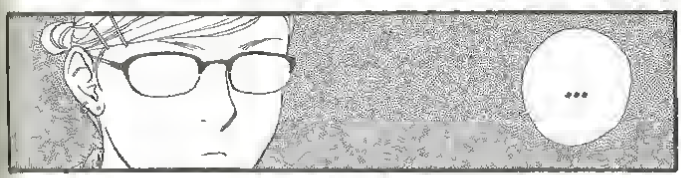

I'M BIGGER, OLDER, HIS EX-MASTER...
...AND THERE'S AN EIGHT-HOUR TIME DIFFERENCE BETWEEN US. I'M AT A TOTAL DISADVANTAGE.
WELL, SHE'S RIGHT.



YOU KNOW I... YOU KNOW TAKESHI AND I DID--
OR, LIKE, MAYBE YOU CAN'T EVEN CALL THAT A GIRLFRIEND?
YOU'RE NOT MUCH OF A LOVER IF YOU CAN'T BE WITH HIM AND CUDDLE, RIGHT?



IT SEEMS THAT MY YOUNGER, LONG-DISTANCE BOYFRIEND'S CUTE EX-GIRLFRIEND IS STAYING OVER AT HIS PLACE.
DO I HAVE A CHANCE AT VICTORY?



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YEAH... BUT MAYBE SHE ALREADY KNOWS.
THAT SCARED ME. I THOUGHT SHE HEARD US.
OF COURSE.
WE HAVE TO MAKE SURE IWAYA-SAN DOESN'T HEAR ABOUT THIS, OKAY?
WELL, THAT'S NOT GOOD, NOW IS IT?
WH-WH-WHAT ABOUT? WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
WE WEREN'T TALKING ABOUT YOU, IWAYA SAN, RIGHT?!
Y-YES, WE HAVEN'T SAID A THING!
DID I DO SOMETHING?
AAHH!

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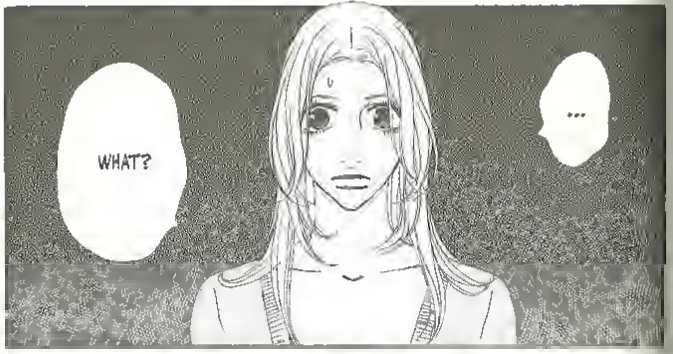
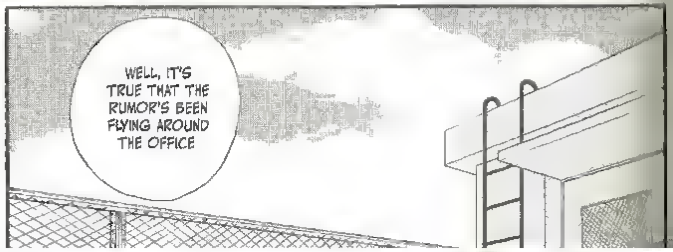
DID YOU HEAR? IS IT TRUE? THAT RUMOR?
THAT A REPORTER NAMED HASUMI WITH THE HONG KONG BRANCH OFFICE ASSAULTED A GIRL FROM SATELLITE NEWS AND WAS DEMOTED?!





*HE MEANS ANIME SERIES AIMED AT CHILDREN, LIKE "CARDCAPTOR SAKURA," WHERE THE GIRL CHARACTERS TRANSFORM INTO SOMETHING

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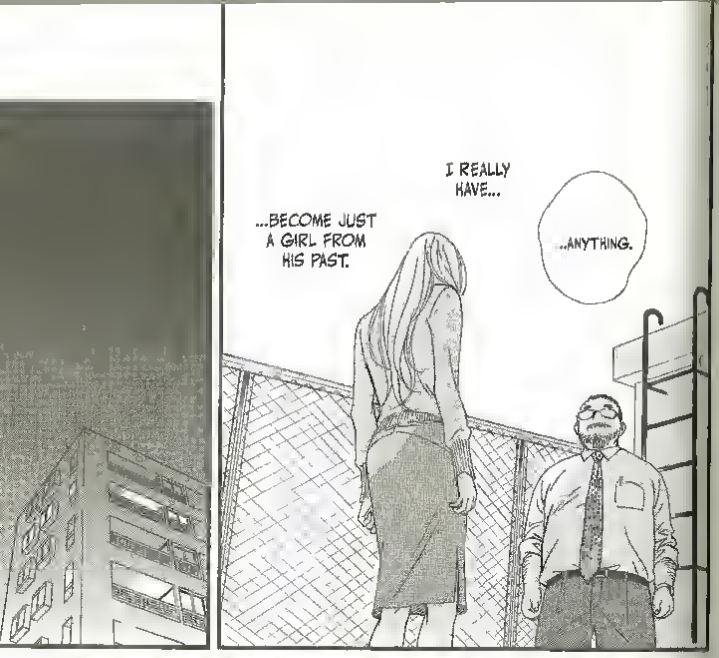
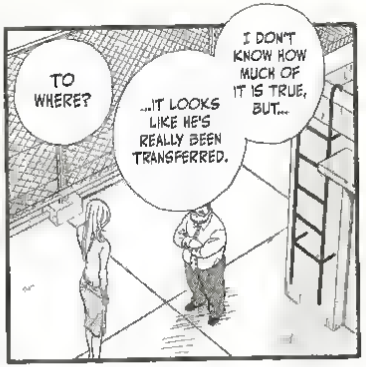
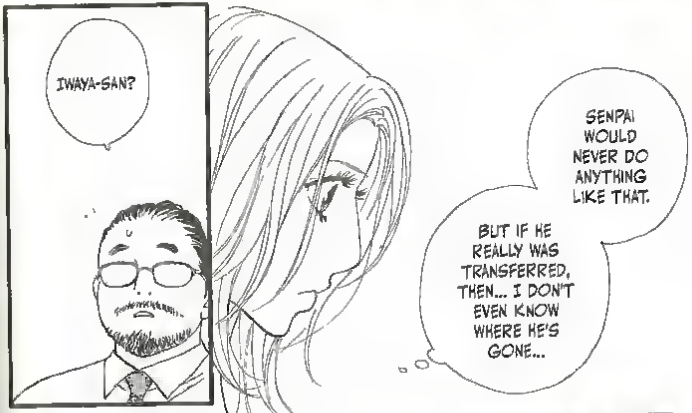


THE RUMORS SAY STUFF LIKE PYONGYANG OR BAGHDAD, BUT...
...WELL, THAT'S PRETTY MUCH IMPOSSIBLE
YOU HAVEN'T HEARD ANYTHING EITHER IWAYA-SAN?





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HELLO, HOW WAS IT?
HUH? SUMIRE-CHAN? HELLO?
MA-CHI-AT-TO, IT SOUNDS LIKE THE NAGOYA DIALECT, BUT IT'S ITALIAN, YOU KNOW.
SLAM
...STILL HAS ENOUGH POWER TO MAKE ME CRY.
HASUMI-SENPAI...
GLUG GLUG GLUG
MAYBE I SHOULD TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO SET HER STRAIGHT--HARD.
IN THE FIRST PLACE, DOESN'T HE FEEL GUILTY ABOUT SNEAKING AROUND AND MEETING WITH HIS EX?!
HE'S PROBABLY HIGH ON TOO MUCH HOT COCOA.*
WHAT'S WITH THE "SUGAR PIE"?! YOU DON'T EVEN KNOW HOW I FEEL RIGHT NOW!
* BELGIUM IS FAMOUS FOR ITS CHOCOLATES
...FEEL BETTER.
?!
HUH?
I KIND OF..
HELL--
YOU DOING GOOD, MY SUGAR PIE?
LISTEN TO MY SONG!
TODAY I'M GOING TO EXPRESS MY BURNING EMOTIONS WITH SONG!
FIRST SONG! "LOVE IS A CARAMEL MACCHIATO"!

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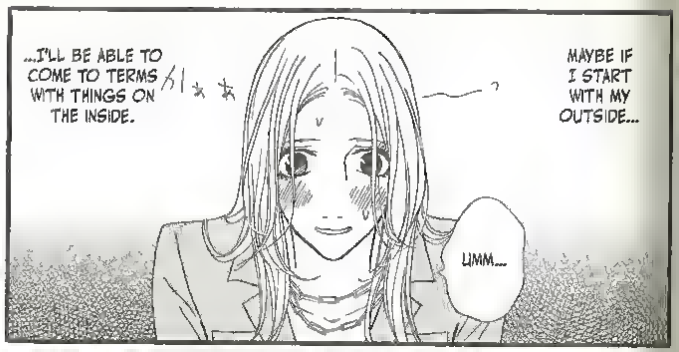
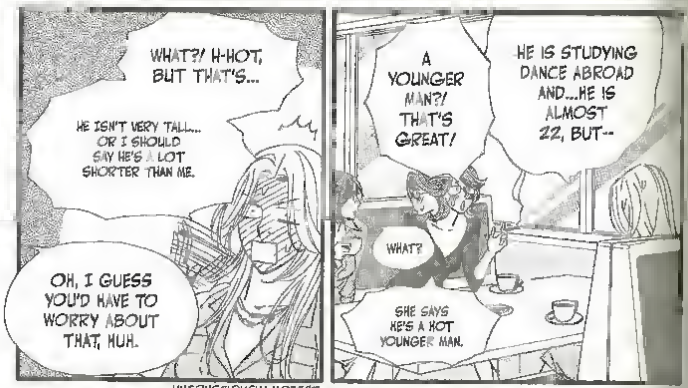
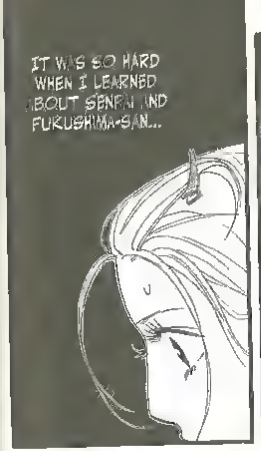



WHAT?! H-HOT, BUT THAT'S...
HE ISN'T VERY TALL... OR I SHOULD SAY HE'S A LOT SHORTER THAN ME.
OH, I GUESS YOU'D HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT THAT, HUH.
A YOUNGER MAN?! THAT'S GREAT!
HE IS STUDYING DANCE ABROAD AND...HE IS ALMOST 22, BUT--
WHAT?
SHE SAYS HE'S A HOT YOUNGER MAN.

UNCONSCIOUSLY MODEST.



AM I...REALLY IN LOVE?

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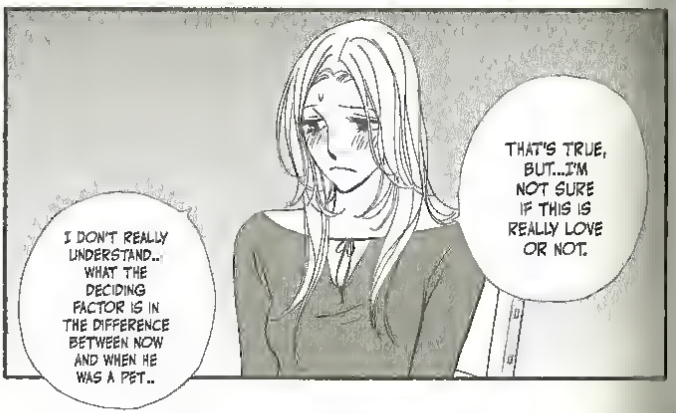
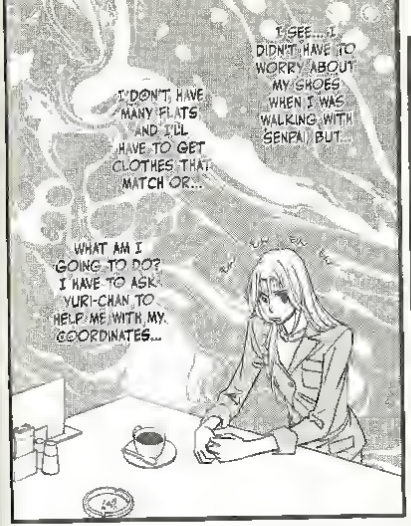
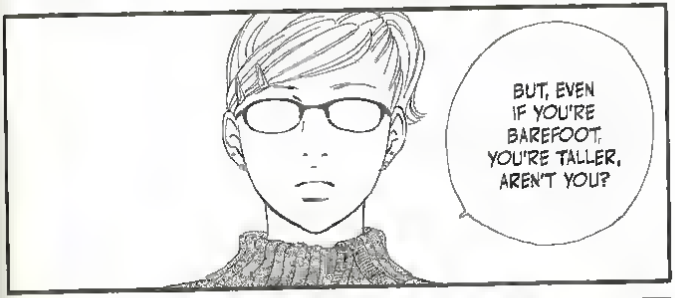
THE BEST PART IS RIGHT NOW, SO WHY DON'T YOU JUST ENJOY IT?
YOU'RE WASTING TIME, YOU KNOW.
...WHY DO YOU KEEP FINDING THINGS TO WORRY ABOUT, ONE AFTER THE OTHER, LIKE THAT?

...EVEN THOUGH IT'S A LONG-DISTANCE RELATIONSHIP, YOUR LOVE'S JUST BEGUN AND THIS IS THE PART WHERE YOU'RE AT MAXIMUM HAPPINESS.
ISN'T IT? AFTER ALL...
BEST PART?


I DON'T REALLY UNDERSTAND.. WHAT THE DECIDING FACTOR IS IN THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN NOW AND WHEN HE WAS A PET..
THAT'S TRUE, BUT...I'M NOT SURE IF THIS IS REALLY LOVE OR NOT.


I SEE... I DIDN'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT MY SHOES WHEN I WAS WALKING WITH SENPAI, BUT...
I DON'T HAVE MANY FLATS AND I'LL HAVE TO GET CLOTHES THAT MATCH OR...
WHAT AM I GOING TO DO? I HAVE TO ASK YURI-CHAN TO HELP ME WITH MY COORDINATES...



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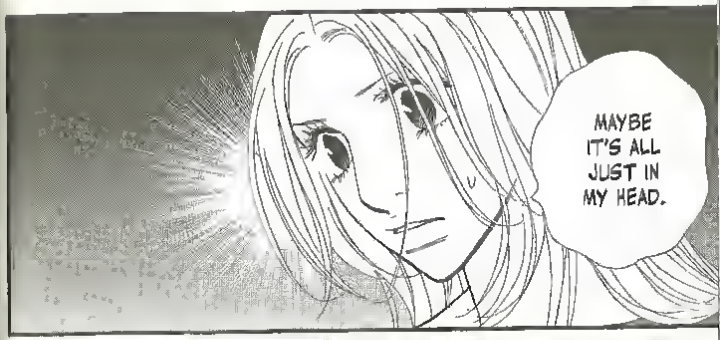
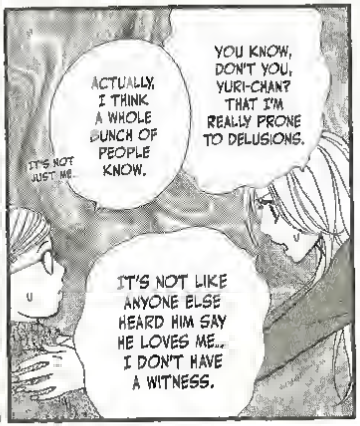
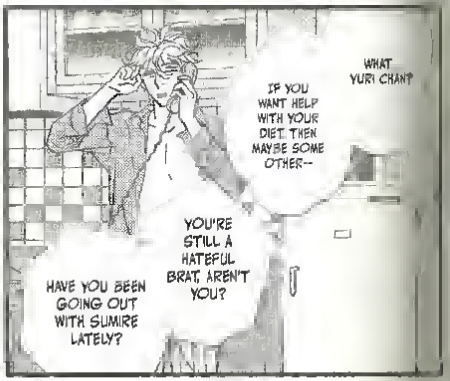
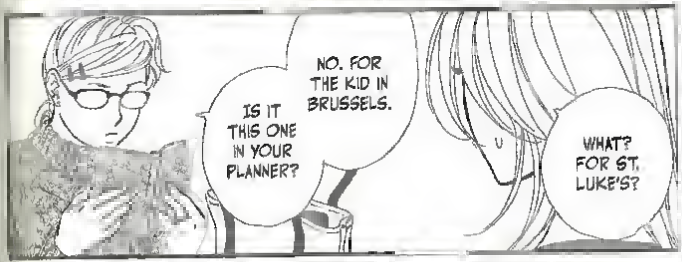


NERVOUS
NERVOUS
MAYBE I'M MAKING IT ALL UP TO ESCAPE REALITY BECAUSE BREAKING UP WITH HASUMI-SENPAI WAS SO HARD ON ME.
WHAT SHOULD I DO? MAYBE IT'S FINALLY TIME FOR ME TO BE COMMITTED.
I BETTER MAKE AN APPOINTMENT WITH ST LUKE'S HOSPITAL.
AND THE PHONE NUMBER IS?


YOU KNOW, DON'T YOU, YURI-CHAN? THAT I'M REALLY PRONE TO DELUSIONS.
ACTUALLY, I THINK A WHOLE BUNCH OF PEOPLE KNOW.
IT'S NOT JUST ME
IT'S NOT LIKE ANYONE ELSE HEARD HIM SAY HE LOVES ME... I DON'T HAVE A WITNESS.


WHAT YURI CHAN?
IF YOU WANT HELP WITH YOUR DIET THEN MAYBE SOME OTHER--
YOU'RE STILL A HATEFUL BRAT, AREN'T YOU?
HAVE YOU BEEN GOING OUT WITH SUMIRE LATELY?



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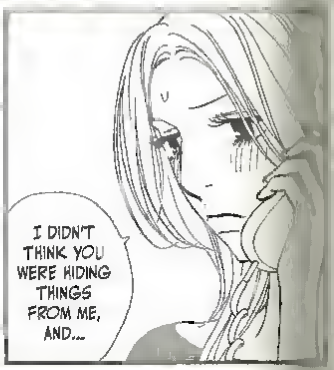
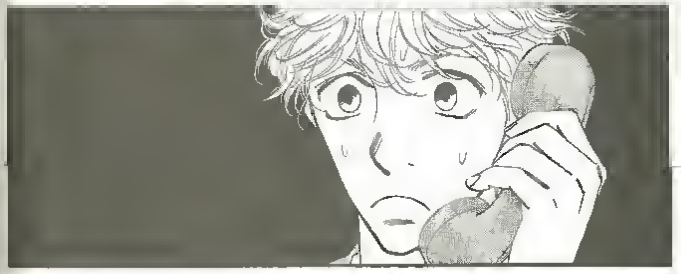
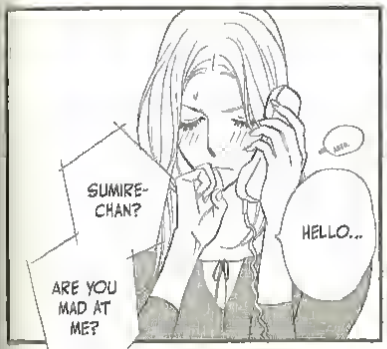


I'LL PUT HER ON THE PHONE IF YOU WANT TO APOLOGIZE.
OH, WHILE I'VE GOT YOUR ATTENTION, I'LL LET YOU KNOW SHE KNOWS YOUR EX-GIRLFRIEND HAS BEEN STAYING OVER.





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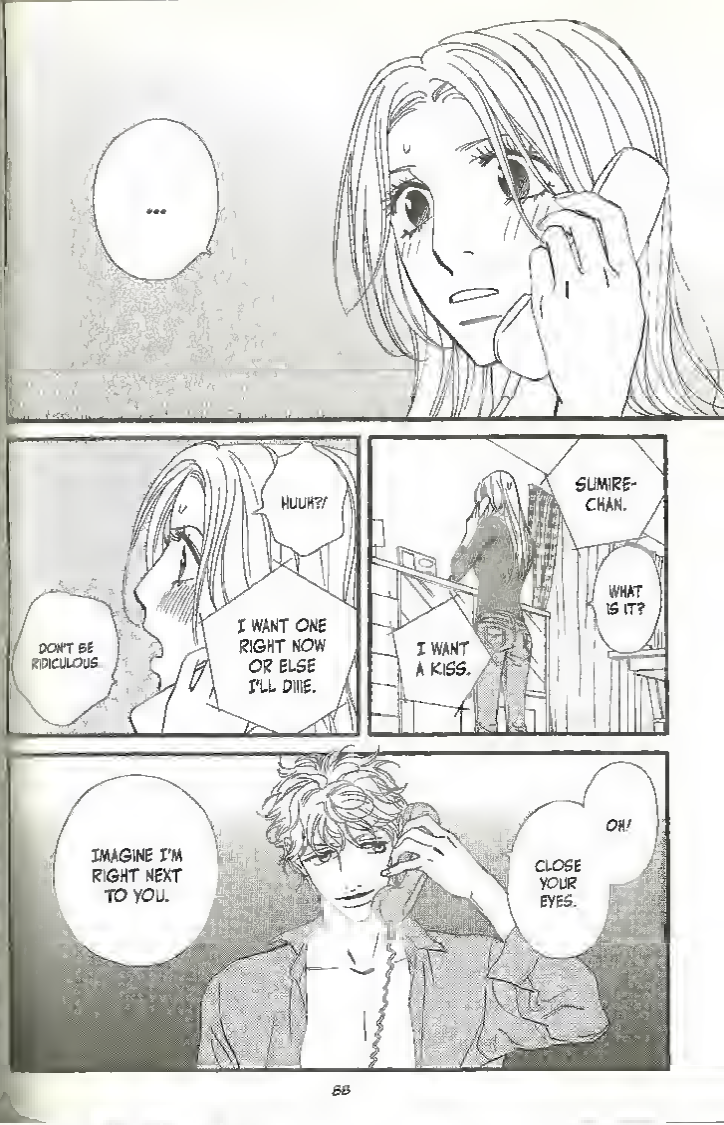
HMM?
OKAY?
WAIT A MOMENT.
RIGHT NOW I'M STROKING YOUR HAIR WITH MY RIGHT HAND, SUMIRE CHAN
MY LEFT HAND IS... WHAT ARE YOU WEARING?
WHAT? MY BLUE CASHMERE BOATNECK.
THEN, MY LEFT HAND IS ON YOUR BACK WHERE IT'S SHOWING A LITTLE
HOW DOES THAT FEEL?
IT FEELS WARM WHERE YOU'RE TOUCHING ME, TOO, SUMIRE-CHAN
HMM... WARM.
YOU SMELL NICE—
YOU'RE LYING.
SHH.
I'M GOING TO KISS YOU, SO BE QUIET.



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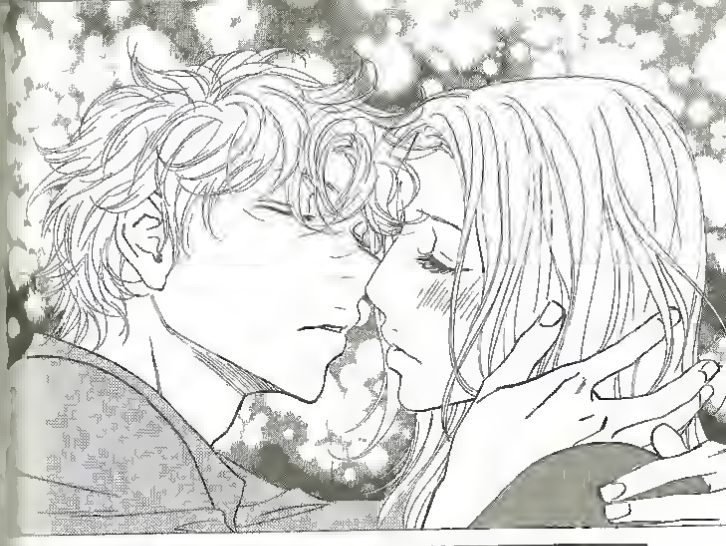

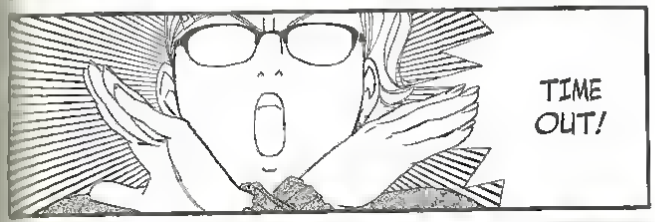

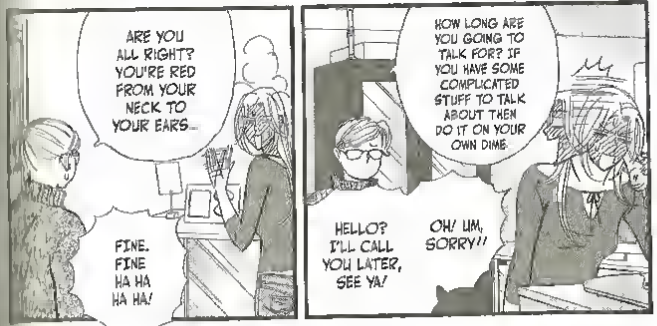
ARE YOU ALL RIGHT? YOU'RE RED FROM YOUR NECK TO YOUR EARS...
FINE. FINE HA HA HA HA!
HOW LONG ARE YOU GOING TO TALK FOR? IF YOU HAVE SOME COMPLICATED STUFF TO TALK ABOUT THEN DO IT ON YOUR OWN DIME.
HELLO? I'LL CALL YOU LATER, SEE YA!
OH! UM, SORRY!!

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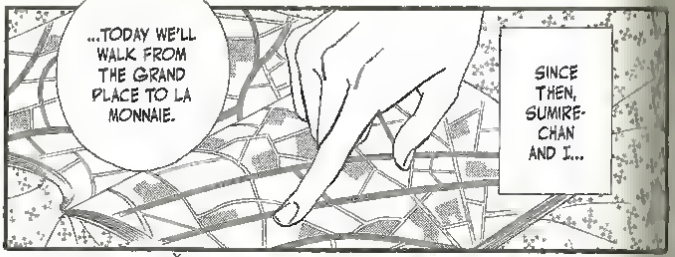
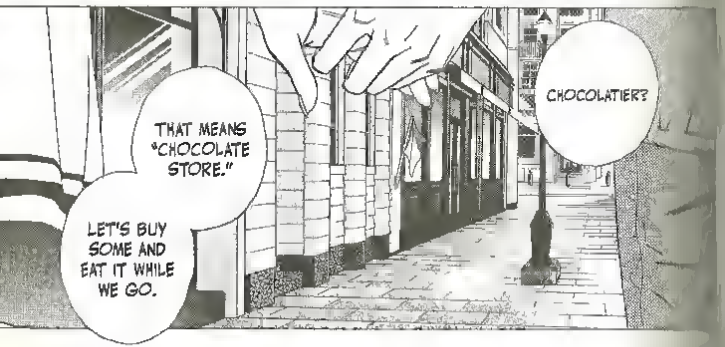


IT JUST MEANS THAT EVEN DELUSIONAL TENDENCIES CAN BE USEFUL.
...ARE HOOKED ON "VIRTUAL DATES."
ROGER
LET'S GO TO THE PARK VIA THE METRO AND HAVE SOMETHING TO EAT.
SO WE HAVE TO BUY LUNCH FIRST.



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SOON, I'LL BE ABLE TO TAKE HER REAL HAND AND...
...WALK AROUND CUDDLING MORE THAN ANY COUPLE IN THIS CITY.
GARE CENTRALE
RAILWAY STATION

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IT'S ANNE!
WHO'D SHE COME TO SEE?
...AND WHERE IS TAKESHI GOUDA?
IN STUDIO A.
I COULDN'T HELP BUT WORRY ABOUT WHAT SOMEONE ELSE THOUGHT ABOUT MY DECISION.
THE CLOTHES I WAS TO WEAR... THE TOYS THEY WOULD BUY FOR ME...
IT WAS AGONY WHEN I WAS TOLD: "DECIDE FOR YOURSELF."
I'VE BEEN INDECISIVE EVER SINCE I WAS A CHILD.
EVERYONE'S TALKING. DID SOMETHING HAPPEN?
THEY SAY ANNE'S COMING.
WHAT? ANNE THERESE DE CHARMEUSE? THE ART DIRECTOR?
I HEAR SHE'LL TAKE A LOOK AT OUR LESSONS, IF WE'RE LUCKY.

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THEY CHOSE YOU AS THE LEAD ALL OF A SUDDEN?!
I SEE...
P
N
G
NGH...
R
I
N
G
DOES THAT MEAN THEY'RE GOING TO HIRE YOU ALL OF A SUDDEN?
THEN, THEN, THE AUDITION?
YEP, UM, IT'S SHORT TIME-WISE, BUT YOU COULD SAY IT'S A SYMBOLIC PART OF THE PIECE...
ANNE SAW ME AND ADDED THE PART AND..
OH! ANNE IS THE COMPANY'S ARTISTIC DIRECTOR AND SHE'S ALSO A FAMOUS DANCER AND...
I HAVE AN EARLY MEETING TOMORROW...
...WHAT?
...
I SAID IT'S YOUR SWEET LOLLIPOP!
DON'T MAKE IT SOUND SO NASTY.
WHAT TIME DO YOU THINK IT IS?
HELLO...
IT'S ME! ME! ME!
A "ME, ME" SCAM? I REFUSE..
SORRY WE'RE SUCH A SILLY COUPLE ALL THE TIME.
OW OW OW!
PINCH.
WHAT SHOULD I DO, SUMIRE-CHAN? IS THIS FOR REAL?
PINCH MY CHEEK! PINCH IT!

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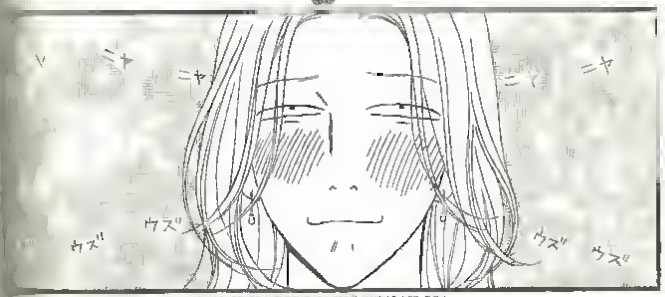
SHE'S AT THE AGE WHERE SUCH THINGS MATTER
OH!
HOLD IT IN, HOLD IT IN... AND...
BUT A GROWN WOMAN IS ABOVE SUCH THINGS.
WHAT DO YOU WANT TO DO FOR LUNCH? I'M GOING OUT.
WRONG NAME.
I BET EVEN HE DOESN'T KNOW ABOUT THIS, YET, HUH?
THAT'S NISHITANI-SAN FROM THE CULTURE DEPARTMENT.
THAT'S AMAZING! HE IS SUCH A GENIUS!!
WOW! HE'S GOING TO DANCE A SOLO IN THE ROTAN PERFORMANCE!?
UMM, I'M GOING TO GO ON AHEAD, OKAY?



DYING TO TELL EVERYONE WHAT'S MAKING HER GRIN.

HEY, JUST A MINUTE ALL THAT GRINNING IS MAKING ME WONDER WHAT'S UP
AND YOU'VE HAD THAT SAME EXPRESSION SINCE MORNING
WHAT?! I-IS THAT RIGHT?

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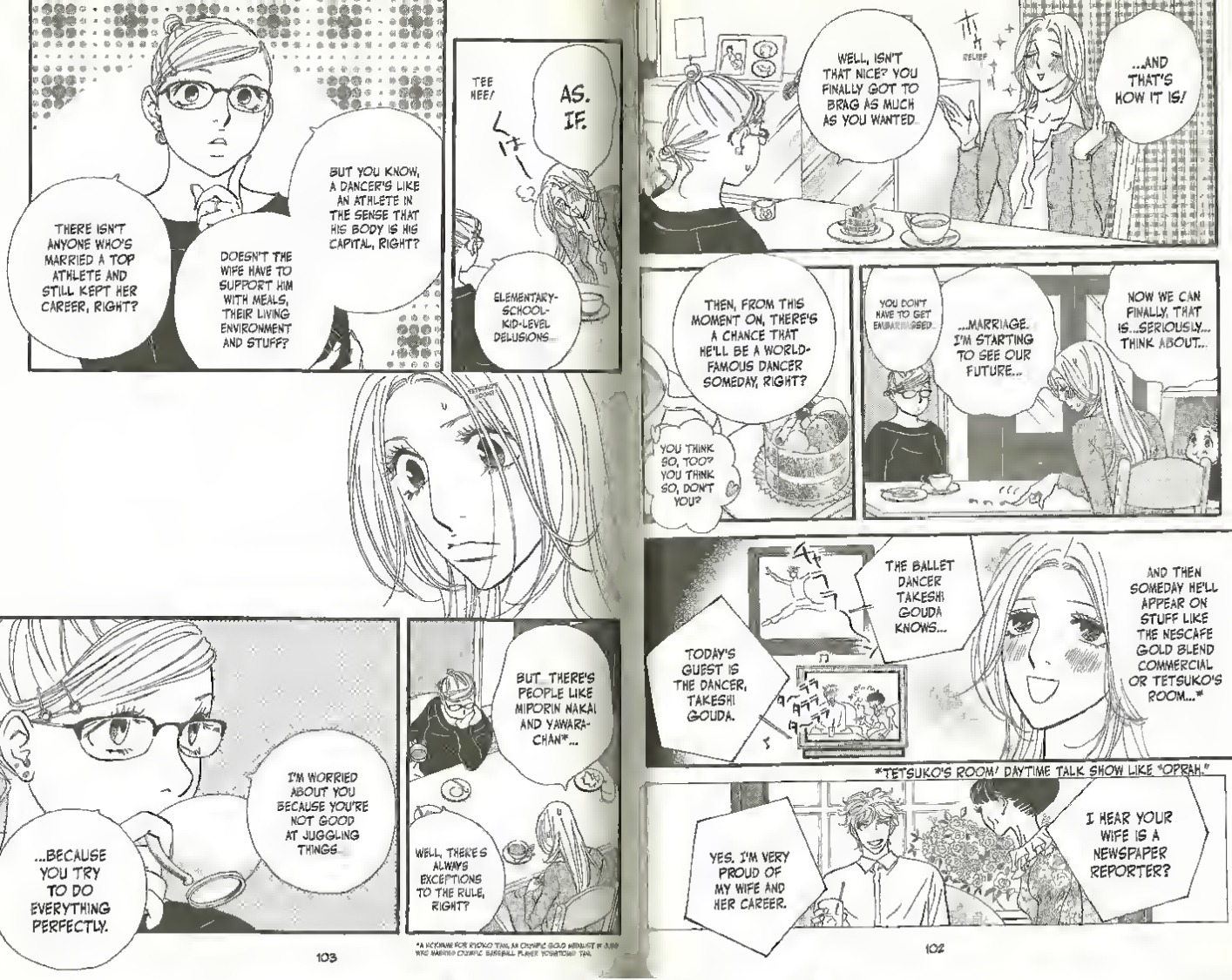
THERE ISN'T ANYONE WHO'S MARRIED A TOP ATHLETE AND STILL KEPT HER CAREER, RIGHT?
DOESN'T THE WIFE HAVE TO SUPPORT HIM WITH MEALS, THEIR LIVING ENVIRONMENT AND STUFF?
BUT YOU KNOW, A DANCER'S LIKE AN ATHLETE IN THE SENSE THAT HIS BODY IS HIS CAPITAL, RIGHT?
TEE HEE!
AS. IF.
ELEMENTARY-SCHOOL-KID-LEVEL DELUSIONS...
...ATTENTION...
...BECAUSE YOU TRY TO DO EVERYTHING PERFECTLY.
I'M WORRIED ABOUT YOU BECAUSE YOU'RE NOT GOOD AT JUGGLING THINGS...
BUT THERE'S PEOPLE LIKE MIPORIN NAKAI AND YAWARA-CHAN*...
WELL, THERE'S ALWAYS EXCEPTIONS TO THE RULE, RIGHT?
*A NICKNAME FOR HYOKO TSUJI, AN OLYMPIC GOLD MEDALIST IN JUDO WHO MARRIED OLYMPIC BASEBALL PLAYER YOSHITOMI TSUJI.
103
WELL, ISN'T THAT NICE? YOU FINALLY GOT TO BRAG AS MUCH AS YOU WANTED.
RELIEF
...AND THAT'S HOW IT IS!
THEN, FROM THIS MOMENT ON, THERE'S A CHANCE THAT HE'LL BE A WORLD-FAMOUS DANCER SOMEDAY, RIGHT?
YOU THINK SO, TOO? YOU THINK SO, DON'T YOU?
YOU DON'T HAVE TO GET EMBARRASSED
...MARRIAGE. I'M STARTING TO SEE OUR FUTURE...
NOW WE CAN FINALLY, THAT IS...SERIOUSLY... THINK ABOUT...
TODAY'S GUEST IS THE DANCER, TAKESHI GOUDA.
THE BALLET DANCER TAKESHI GOUDA KNOWS...
AND THEN SOMEDAY HE'LL APPEAR ON STUFF LIKE THE NESCAFE GOLD BLEND COMMERCIAL OR TETSUKO'S ROOM...*
*TETSUKO'S ROOM: DAYTIME TALK SHOW LIKE "OPRAH."
YES. I'M VERY PROUD OF MY WIFE AND HER CAREER.
I HEAR YOUR WIFE IS A NEWSPAPER REPORTER?
102

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I KIND OF UNDERSTAND WHAT YURI-CHAN IS TRYING TO SAY.

YEAH..

I THOUGHT A GOOD THING ABOUT THAT KID WAS THAT HE ACCEPTS YOU JUST AS YOU ARE, SUMIRE.

IT'S HARD TO REALLY UNDERSTAND THAT.

BUT WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE ACCEPTED?

I REALLY WAS THINKING ABOUT IT THE WHOLE TIME AND, YURI-CHAN, WHAT YOU WANT TO SAY IS...

I KNOW.

WHAT IF I BECOME A NORMAL WOMAN?

WHAT ELSE WOULD YOU EXPECT OF IWAYA-SAN?

IF I WORK EARNESTLY AND GIVE MY BEST, THEN EVERYONE WILL PRAISE ME.

IWAYA-KUN IS VERY CAPABLE, YOU KNOW

IT'S LIKE HAVING SOMEONE TAKE AWAY MY WEAPONS... LIKE I'D BE STRIPPED NAKED.

"BUT WHAT'LL HAPPEN IF HE TAKES WORK AWAY FROM YOU?"

YOU'RE ALREADY IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL NOW, SO DECIDE FOR YOURSELF.

WHICH OUTFIT SHOULD I WEAR?

BUT IT'S NOT LIKE THAT IN YOUR OWN FAMILY, YOU KNOW.

YOU'D BE WORRIED ABOUT BEING STARK NAKED IF YOU WERE ON THE BATTLEFIELD, RIGHT?

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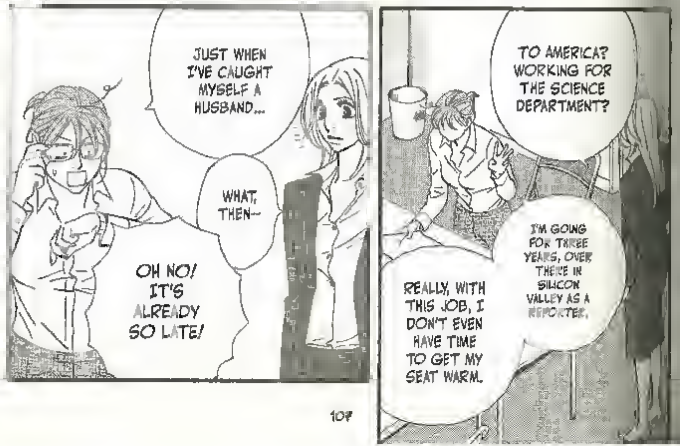
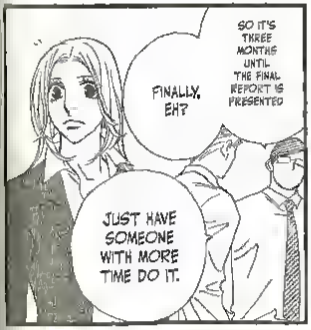
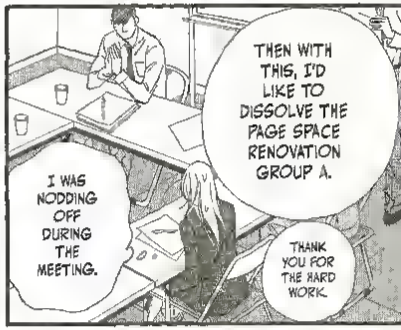
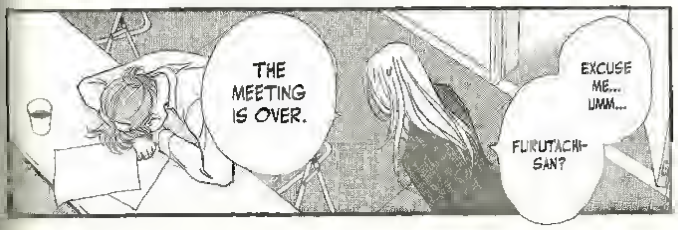
SLEEP HAIR.
OH NO! I FELL ASLEEP AGAIN!
WHAT?! OH NO, THE MEETING'S OVER?!
I WAS COVERING THE QUANTUM CALCULATION TESTS AT TSUKUBA UNIVERSITY UNTIL THIS MORNING!
WHAT?!
EEK!

I THOUGHT IT WOULDN'T GET DONE BEFORE I WENT TO AMERICA
OH, THAT'S GREAT.
THE REPORT IS DONE, SO THE A GROUP HAS BEEN DISSOLVED FOR NOW.


JUST WHEN I'VE CAUGHT MYSELF A HUSBAND...
WHAT, THEN--
OH NO! IT'S ALREADY SO LATE!
TO AMERICA? WORKING FOR THE SCIENCE DEPARTMENT?
I'M GOING FOR THREE YEARS, OVER THERE IN SILICON VALLEY AS A REPORTER.
REALLY, WITH THIS JOB, I DON'T EVEN HAVE TIME TO GET MY SEAT WARM.




THEN WITH THIS, I'D LIKE TO DISSOLVE THE PAGE SPACE RENOVATION GROUP A.
I WAS NODDING OFF DURING THE MEETING.
THANK YOU FOR THE HARD WORK.



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HA HA HA...
ONE AFTER ANOTHER, YOUR COMRADES DISAPPEAR.
BEING A WORKING WOMAN IS LIKE A SURVIVAL GAME, ISN'T IT?
WELL, NOT OUR PROBLEM.
...RRR
YES? THIS IS THE ENGLISH-LANGUAGE NEWSPAPER DEPARTMENT
YES, THIS IS SHE, BUT...
—EXCUSE ME?
FIRST OFF, I'LL HAVE YOU KNOW...
OOH, FURUTACHI-SAN FROM THE SCIENCE DEPARTMENT, EH?
I HAVE TO HURRY UP AND GET READY!!
トゥダダダ
FROM TONIGHT TO WHENEVER THEY LAUNCH THE H2 ROCKET, I HAVE TO STAY OVER IN TANEGASHIMA*!
*WHERE JAPAN'S SPACE PROGRAM HAS A LAUNCH COMPLEX.
...IT'S A CASE OF "MARRYING DOWN."
HER HUSBAND IS A STRUGGLING ACTOR OR SOMETHING AND—
THEN, IS HE GOING TO AMERICA WITH HER?
OH, THAT'S RIGHT. I THINK SHE WENT TO THE SAME SCHOOL AS YOU.
SHE'S GOT A GRADUATE DEGREE AND IS TWO YEARS OLDER THAN ME, BUT...
SHE'S COOL SO I GO DRINKING WITH HER EVERY ONCE IN A WHILE.
THIS IS JUST BETWEEN YOU AND ME, BUT IT'S A MIRACLE SHE EVEN GOT MARRIED.
SHE ALWAYS PUTS HER WORK FIRST, SO HER MAN NEVER GETS ESTABLISHED, YOU KNOW.
WELL, NO, AND SHE WAS WORRYING ABOUT THAT.

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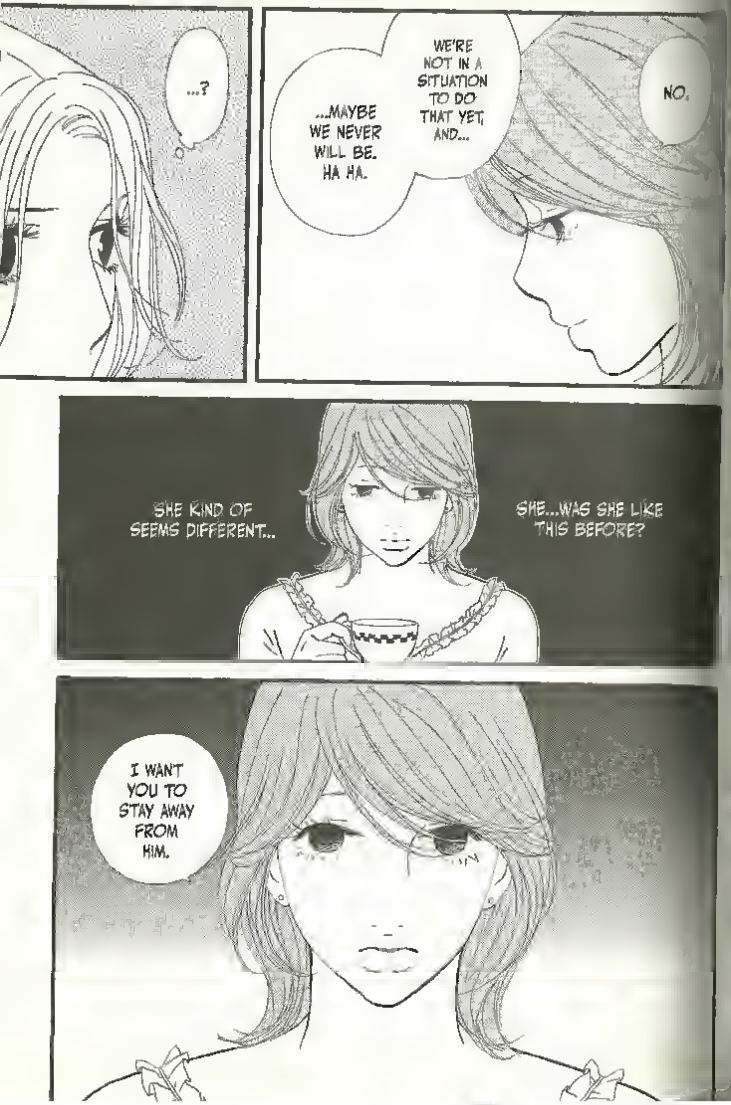
...?
...MAYBE WE NEVER WILL BE. HA HA.
WE'RE NOT IN A SITUATION TO DO THAT YET, AND...
NO.
SHE KIND OF SEEMS DIFFERENT...
SHE...WAS SHE LIKE THIS BEFORE?
I WANT YOU TO STAY AWAY FROM HIM.
YOU AREN'T REALLY SURPRISED, ARE YOU?
...I'M LIVING WITH HASUMI-SAN RIGHT NOW.
HOWEVER, I DIDN'T KNOW FOR SURE AND I DON'T KNOW ANYTHING ELSE.
I HAD MY IDEAS.
...ARE YOU MARRIED?
I DON'T REALLY LIKE COLD PLACES, BUT IT SEEMS TO SUIT HIM.
HE'S DOING WELL, YOU KNOW. HE'S BEEN REASSIGNED TO A LOCAL DEPARTMENT. HE'S IN NAGANO RIGHT NOW.

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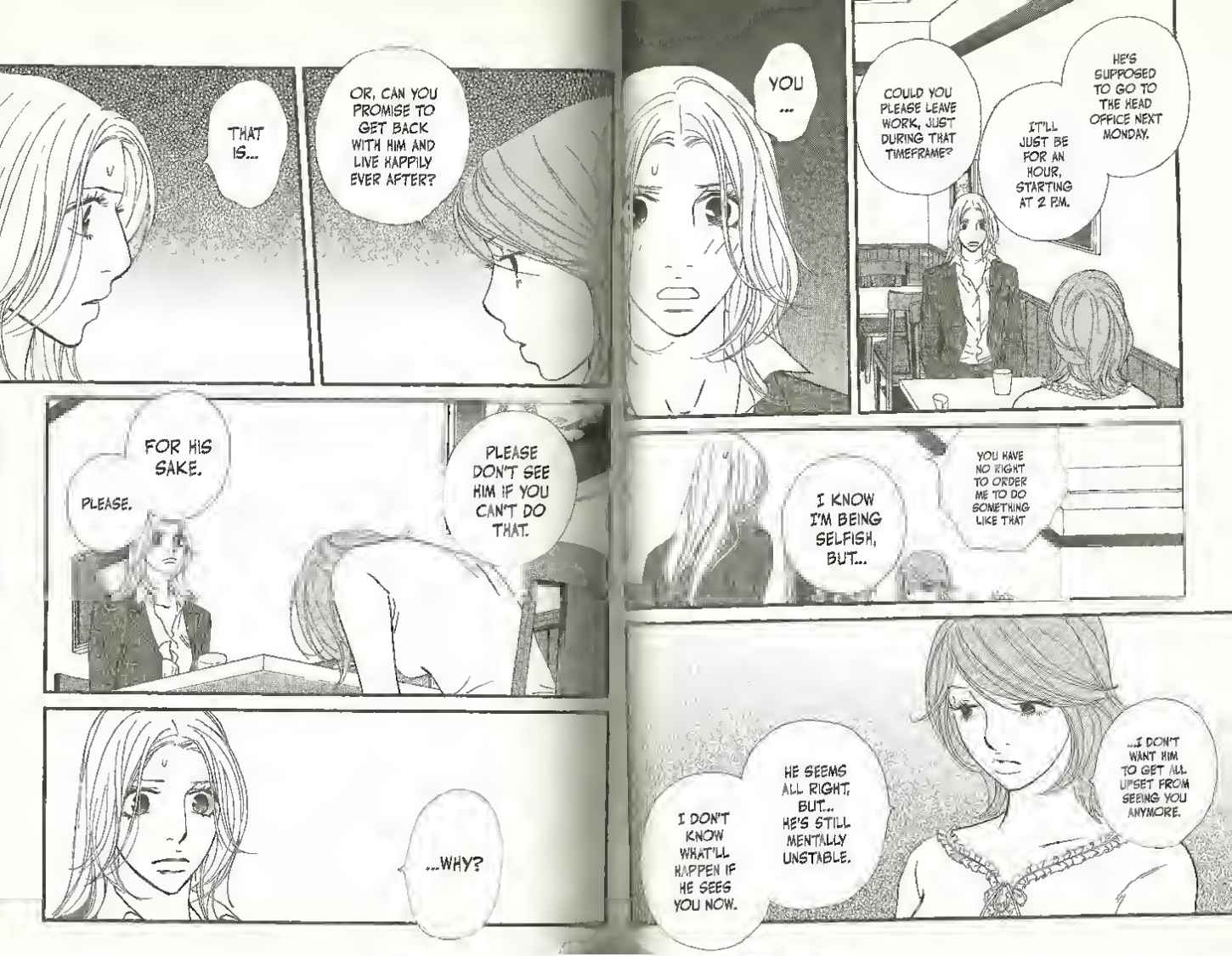
THAT IS...
OR, CAN YOU PROMISE TO GET BACK WITH HIM AND LIVE HAPPILY EVER AFTER?
YOU ...
COULD YOU PLEASE LEAVE WORK, JUST DURING THAT TIMEFRAME?
IT'LL JUST BE FOR AN HOUR, STARTING AT 2 P.M.
HE'S SUPPOSED TO GO TO THE HEAD OFFICE NEXT MONDAY.
FOR HIS SAKE.
PLEASE.
PLEASE DON'T SEE HIM IF YOU CAN'T DO THAT.
I KNOW I'M BEING SELFISH, BUT...
YOU HAVE NO RIGHT TO ORDER ME TO DO SOMETHING LIKE THAT
...WHY?
I DON'T KNOW WHAT'LL HAPPEN IF HE SEES YOU NOW.
HE SEEMS ALL RIGHT, BUT... HE'S STILL MENTALLY UNSTABLE.
...I DON'T WANT HIM TO GET ALL UPSET FROM SEEING YOU ANYMORE.

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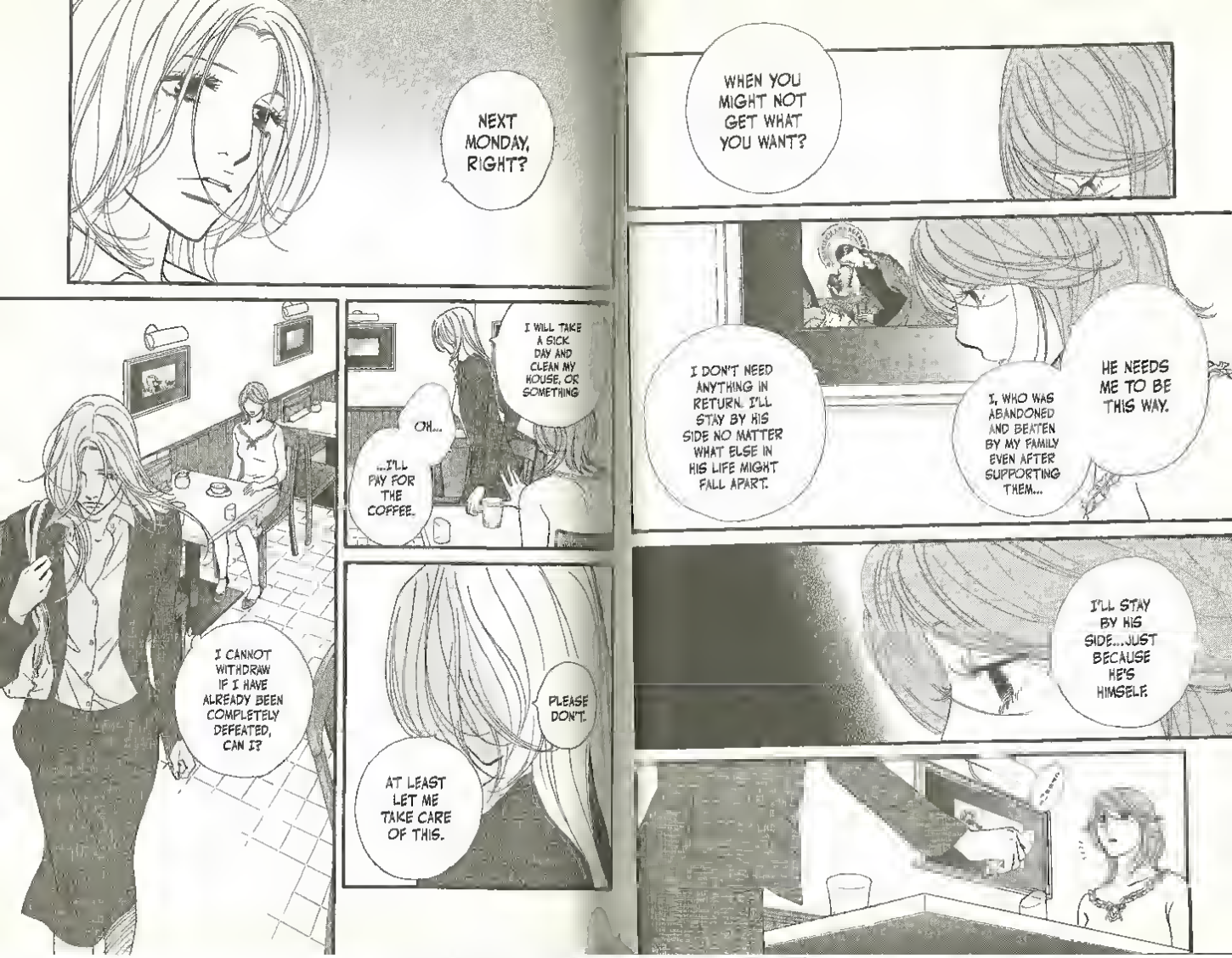
NEXT MONDAY, RIGHT?
I CANNOT WITHDRAW IF I HAVE ALREADY BEEN COMPLETELY DEFEATED, CAN I?
I WILL TAKE A SICK DAY AND CLEAN MY HOUSE, OR SOMETHING
OH...
...I'LL PAY FOR THE COFFEE.
PLEASE DON'T.
AT LEAST LET ME TAKE CARE OF THIS.
WHEN YOU MIGHT NOT GET WHAT YOU WANT?
I DON'T NEED ANYTHING IN RETURN. I'LL STAY BY HIS SIDE NO MATTER WHAT ELSE IN HIS LIFE MIGHT FALL APART.
I, WHO WAS ABANDONED AND BEATEN BY MY FAMILY EVEN AFTER SUPPORTING THEM...
HE NEEDS ME TO BE THIS WAY.
I'LL STAY BY HIS SIDE...JUST BECAUSE HE'S HIMSELF.

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NO... IT'S JUST THAT I WAS JUST THINKING OF THIS AND THAT AND GOT TIRED.
HOW ABOUT YOU?
I SEE, THAT'S GOOD.
...UM, YOU KNOW... WHEN YOU GET MARRIED, MOMO, DO YOU WANT YOUR WIFE TO STAY AT HOME?
FUKUSHIMA-SAN THE WAY SHE IS NOW...
...WOULD DEFINITELY PUT HASUMI-SENPAI BEFORE WORK. OR ANYTHING, FOR THAT MATTER...
YOU MEAN, DO I WANT YOU TO QUIT YOUR JOB OR NOT, SUMIRE-CHAN?
I MEAN, DO YOU WANT YOUR MARRIAGE PARTNER TO QUIT HER JOB OR NOT...
W--
WELL, THAT'S RIGHT, I GUESS...
IN SHORT, DO YOU MEAN DO I WANT YOU TO STAY AT HOME, SUMIRE-CHAN?
WHAT...
UH...
W-WELL, THAT'S RIGHT, I GUESS...
WERE YOU ASLEEP ALREADY?
WHAT'S WRONG? YOUR VOICE IS KIND OF LOW.
HI, THIS IS YOUR SNICKERS BAR.
DO YOU THINK YOU COULD STOP MENTIONING BRAND NAMES?

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BECAUSE... IF WE FIGHT ABOUT IT OR...IF YOU DON'T LIKE ME BECAUSE OF IT...
WHY?
BECAUSE... I CAN'T DECIDE UNLESS I KNOW HOW YOU FEEL, MOMO.
BUT THAT'S THAT KIND OF ROUNDABOUT ANSWER DOESN'T HELP.
WHY?
SUMIRE-CHAN, I WON'T STOP LIKING YOU BECAUSE OF WHAT YOU DECIDE, YOU KNOW!
HA HA HA!
...LOVE YOU JUST BECAUSE YOU'RE YOU.
SUMIRE-CHAN, I...
EITHER WAY'S FINE!
WHAT!!
HUH?
WELL, THAT'S RIGHT, HUH...
AFTER ALL, IN THE END, YOU'RE THE ONE WHO HAS TO DECIDE, SUMIRE-CHAN.
WHAT...?
...YOU'RE THE ONE WHO NEEDS TO THINK ABOUT IT RIGHT, SUMIRE-CHAN?
THAT'S TRUE, BUT...
THAT'S NOT AN ANSWER! THINK ABOUT IT HARDER! IT'S AN IMPORTANT ISSUE.

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...I LOVE YOU JUST THE WAY YOU ARE TOO, MOMO.
STUPID
AFTER THAT STATEMENT, IT'S UP TO SEVEN BOWLS!
CRAZY, UNUSUALLY DIRECT WORDS!
BUT...IF I WEAR CLOTHES THAT GRANDFATHER DOESN'T LIKE...
YOU'RE ALREADY IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL NOW. SO DECIDE FOR YOURSELF.
...HE WON'T LIKE ME.
WHICH OUTFIT DO YOU THINK I SHOULD WEAR?
BIG SISTER?

OH...
...TO BE ACCEPTED?
...YEAH.
IS THIS WHAT IT MEANS...
DO YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT I MEAN?
OH, MY LUNCH BREAK'S ALMOST OVER.
YEAH... LIM, YOU KNOW...
TO PUT IT ANOTHER WAY, SUMIRE-CHAN, YOU CAN EAT THREE BOWLS OF RICE ALL BY YOURSELF, IF YOU WANT TO.
THAT'S MORE CONFUSING!

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SO CHOOSE WHAT YOU LIKE.
GRANDFATHER WILL NOT HATE YOU FOR SOMETHING LIKE THAT.
SILLY
IT WAS "YOU CAN DECIDE FOR YOURSELF," WASN'T IT?
IT WASN'T "YOU HAVE TO DECIDE FOR YOURSELF."
MAYBE A LITTLE OF MY INDECISIVENESS WILL BE CURED
...THE TIME FOR THE DECISION CREEPS CLOSER AND CLOSER
WAIT, NEXT ISSUE!
WITHOUT WAITING FOR HER SLOW FEELINGS TO CATCH UP..

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HEY, SUKE?
WHAT IS IT, MR. OSWALD?
WEREN'T ONSENS* SUPPOSED TO BE UNISEX?
THIS IS UNISEX.
*A JAPANESE HOT SPRING
THEN WHY ARE IWAYA AND MOTOKO ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE WALL?
BECAUSE THAT SIDE'S THE WOMEN'S SIDE.
OH...THE WATER'S GREAT.
AUTUMN...
THE FACES OF OUR ENGLISH-LANGUAGE NEWSPAPER DEPARTMENT ARE...
YOU THINK SO? IWAYA HAS PRETTY LEGS, TOO, EH?
SUBCONSCIOUSLY HUNCHES OVER
SO TRUE... I AM ENVIOUS.
EMMA, YOU REALLY HAVE A GREAT BODY, DON'T YOU?
HAMANO SAN.
HMM? WHY ARE YOU MOVING AWAY ALL OF A SUDDEN?
WADE
WADE
WADE
OH NO.. IT'S NOTHING..
IT'S SO BEAUTIFUL WHEN YOU TWO ARE LIKE THAT.
IT'S A FEAST FOR THE EYES MY EYES ARE HAPPY!
THEN UNISEX IS MEANINGLESS, ISN'T IT?! THEN WHY DID I COME HERE ANYWAY?!!
I DON'T KNOW!!
REALLY, WHY DID YOU COME?
WELL NOW...
WOW! IT LOOKS DELICIOUS.
THE DEPARTMENT IS AT A HOT SPRINGS RESORT.
...
THIS? LET ME USE IT! LET ME USE IT!
IT'S BUBBLE BATH SOAP...
BECAUSE MY SKIN'S SENSITIVE.
AND YOUR SKIN'S SO SMOOTH! WHAT BODY SOAP DO YOU USE?

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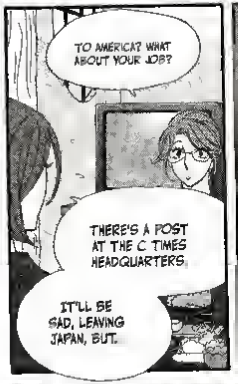
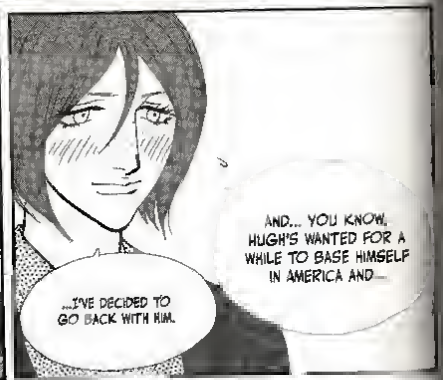
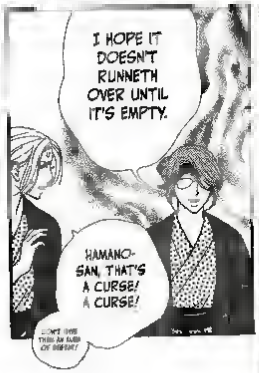
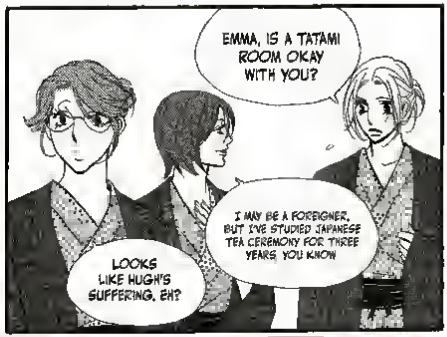
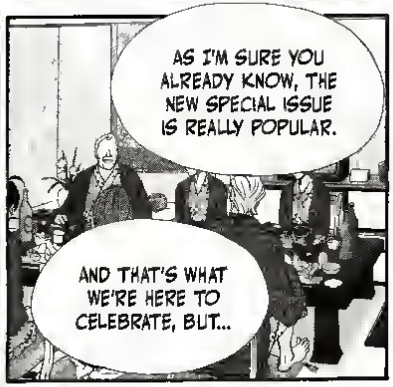







EMMA, IS A TATAMI ROOM OKAY WITH YOU?
I MAY BE A FOREIGNER, BUT I'VE STUDIED JAPANESE TEA CEREMONY FOR THREE YEARS, YOU KNOW
LOOKS LIKE HUGH'S SUFFERING, EH?



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...BECAUSE I LIVED WITH MOMO.
...IF I DID CHANGE, THEN IT'S PROBABLY...
BUT...
IT'S ALL RIGHT NOW.
SUMIRE-CHAN..
..SO I WAS ABLE TO BE HONEST WITH MYSELF AND KIND TO OTHER PEOPLE, TOO.
MOMO WAS ALWAYS BY MY SIDE AND ACCEPTED ALL MY FEELINGS...
NOW THAT WE'RE SO FAR APART?
WHAT CAN I DO FOR HIM...
I SEE...
HMM, THIS ABALONE'S SOFT.
THAT, AND NORMAL FOREIGNERS DON'T WANT TO DO STUFF LIKE EMPLOYEE TRIPS.
MOST OF THE STAFF HAVE YEARLY CONTRACTS, AND THE WORKERS ARE HERE IN BETWEEN POSITIONS.
IN THE ENGLISH-LANGUAGE NEWSPAPER DEPARTMENT, THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN PEOPLE ARE USUALLY A LOT COOLER.
WHY IS THAT?
EVEN SO, THIS WILL BE THE FIRST AND LAST TIME FOR THIS KIND OF THING, WON'T IT?
OR SHOULD I SAY, YOU DO YOUR OWN THING?
RIGHT! THE WAY YOU'RE SO INDIVIDUALISTIC, IT'S SO NOT JAPANESE.
WHAT? M-ME?
STRAIGHT OUT!
BUT WHAT'S REALLY UNUSUAL IS YOU!
ガーン SHOCK
A DRUNK PERSON'S TRUE THOUGHTS ARE SCARY
S-SO THAT'S HOW IT MUST HAVE LOOKED...
WHAT... DO YOU REALLY THINK THAT?
YOU HAVE THAT "EVERYONE ELSE IS A LOWER LIFE FORM" KIND OF EXPRESSION AND...
YEAH, IT'S TRUE. IT'S GOTTEN BETTER, BUT...
...BEFORE, IT WAS INTOLERABLE, YOU KNOW?

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IT LOOKS LIKE YOUR NEW POST WILL BE IN LONDON.
1,200 EUROS, HMM...
A PLACE FOR YOU AND YOUR GIRLFRIEND WHO'S IN JAPAN?
YEAH...
...THAT'S RIGHT...
ARE YOU LOOKING FOR A PLACE, TAKESHI?
A RABBIT HUTCH WOULD BE FINE/ OR JUST A HUT.
THERE'S NO CHEAPER, SMALLER PLACE?
IS IT BECAUSE RUMI AND I ARE GOING OUT? WE CAN'T BE ROOMMATES ANYMORE?
NO, NO...
I'M JUST LOOKING TO GET A GENERAL IDEA FOR THE FUTURE, THAT'S ALL.
WHAT, ARE YOU GOING BACK TO WORK, TOO?
YES, I AM... THERE IS A FAX COMMUNICATION THAT I MUST CONFIRM.
I HAVE TO GIVE THEM YOUR ANSWER BY NEXT WEEK.
IT LOOKS LIKE THEY WON'T BE ABLE TO WAIT UNTIL THE OFFICE TRANSFER PERIOD.
IT'S ABOUT THAT MOVE TO THE WORLD NEWS DEPARTMENT.
THEN, I'M SORRY TO DO IT WHILE WALKING, CAN I TALK TO YOU ABOUT SOMETHING?
YES?
IT LOOKS LIKE THE HIGHER-UPS HAVE ALREADY MADE THEIR DECISION.
IT'S A SHAME BUT...
AS LONG AS YOU DON'T HAVE A SPECIAL REASON TO STAY PUT, THE NOTICE OF PERSONNEL CHANGE WILL GO OUT, YOU KNOW.

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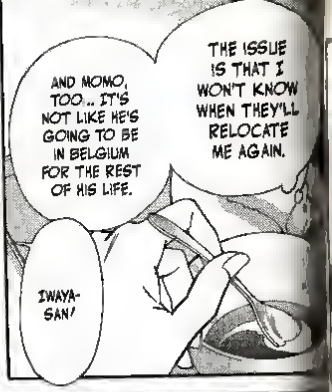
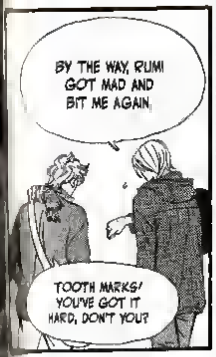
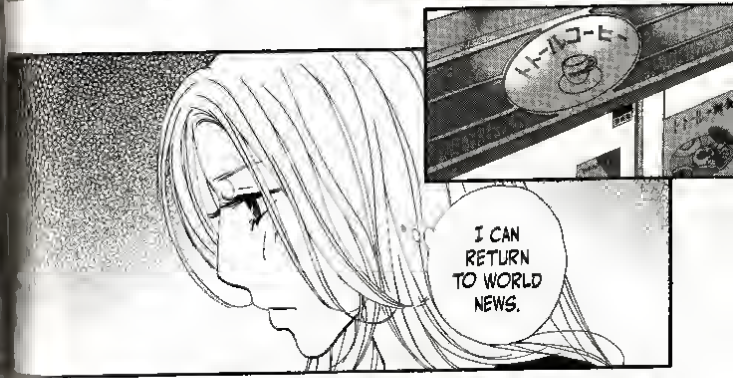
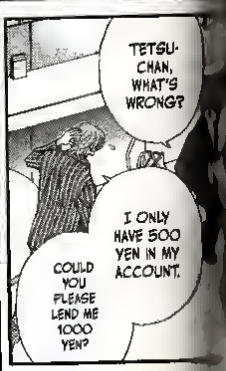

THE ISSUE IS THAT I WON'T KNOW WHEN THEY'LL RELOCATE ME AGAIN.
AND MOMO, TOO... IT'S NOT LIKE HE'S GOING TO BE IN BELGIUM FOR THE REST OF HIS LIFE.
IWAYA-SAN!



COME TO THINK OF IT, DIDN'T YOU GO TO TANEGASHIMA?
THEY POSTPONED THE LAUNCH AGAIN, SO I CAME BACK.
BECAUSE I JUST LEFT MY HUSBAND HANGING, YOU KNOW.





PLUS LONDON IS ONLY ABOUT... THREE HOURS FROM BRUSSELS ON THE EUROSTAR?
WE COULDN'T LIVE TOGETHER, BUT WE'LL BE ABLE TO SEE EACH OTHER MORE OFTEN THAN WE CAN NOW..
IT'S NOT A BAD DEAL, IS IT?

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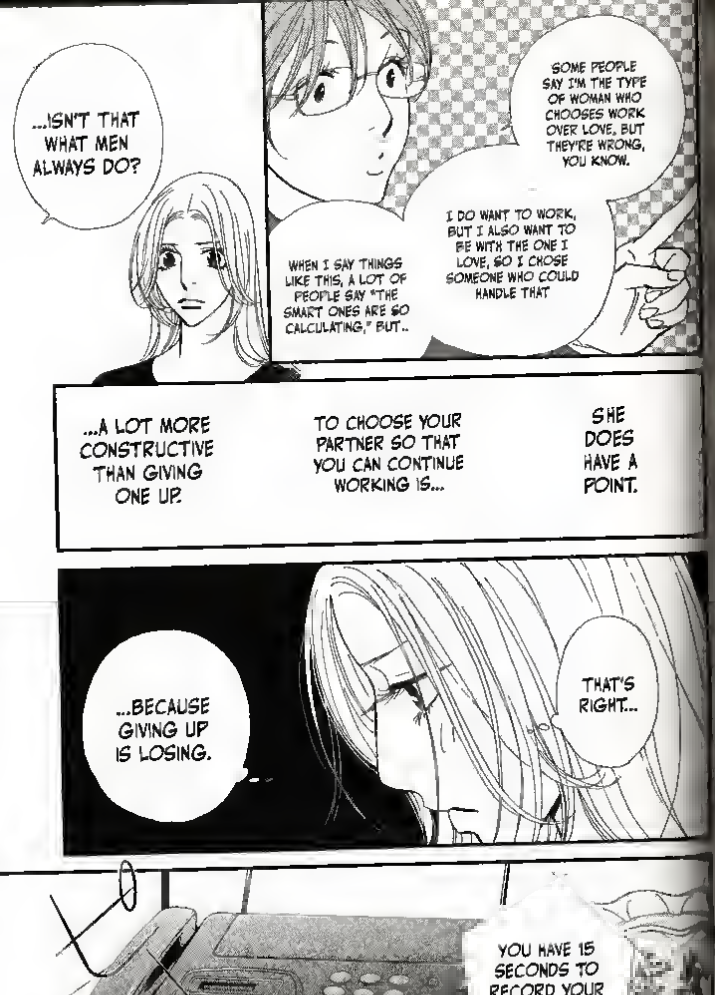
...ISN'T THAT WHAT MEN ALWAYS DO?
WHEN I SAY THINGS LIKE THIS, A LOT OF PEOPLE SAY "THE SMART ONES ARE SO CALCULATING," BUT..
I DO WANT TO WORK, BUT I ALSO WANT TO BE WITH THE ONE I LOVE, SO I CHOSE SOMEONE WHO COULD HANDLE THAT
SOME PEOPLE SAY I'M THE TYPE OF WOMAN WHO CHOOSES WORK OVER LOVE, BUT THEY'RE WRONG, YOU KNOW.
...A LOT MORE CONSTRUCTIVE THAN GIVING ONE UP.
TO CHOOSE YOUR PARTNER SO THAT YOU CAN CONTINUE WORKING IS...
SHE DOES HAVE A POINT.
...BECAUSE GIVING UP IS LOSING.
THAT'S RIGHT...
YOU HAVE 15 SECONDS TO RECORD YOUR MESSAGE.

YOU'RE SWEATING IS SOMETHING WRONG?
OH NO, IT'S NOTHING.
OR...
WE'RE NOT RELATED BY BLOOD, BUT THIS IS MY YOUNGER STEPBROTHER, TETSU-CHAN.
SO IT'S NOT LIKE THAT...
THIS IS TETSU-CHAN, THE ACTOR THAT I CAPTURED WITH MONEY BECAUSE HE WAS BROKE
HUSBAND-SAN
GOOD QUESTION.. HE'S AN ACTOR, BUT...
BUT I TOLD HIM IT'S A WASTE OF TIME THAT COULD BE VALUABLE FOR HIS CAREER IN JAPAN, AND SO WE CAN'T HELP BEING SEPARATED FOR THREE YEARS
...HE SAYS HE'LL COME AFTER THE RUN OF HIS CURRENT PLAY IS OVER.
UMM...
HMM?
IS YOUR HUSBAND GOING WITH YOU TO AMERICA?
I GOT ENGAGED THREE TIMES! BUT I FINALLY FOUND A WINNER!
IWAYA-SAN, YOU HAVE TO CHOOSE YOUR MAN WELL, TOO, IF YOU WANT TO CONTINUE THIS LINE OF WORK!
AS IF! I SAID THAT ALL SWEETLY AND HE LIVED UP TO MY EXPECTATIONS BY INSISTING HE'D COME WITH ME!!

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...AND A CAFE AU LAIT WITH PLENTY OF MILK.
FRIED EGGS AND OCTOPUS-SHAPED SAUSAGE.
IT'S BEEN A WHILE SINCE I MADE A REAL BREAKFAST LIKE THIS.
OH, THAT'S RIGHT.
HUH? ARE WE STILL LIVING TOGETHER?
MORNING, MOMO.
MORNING, SUMIRE-CHAN.
I GOT MARRIED.
...WITH CURLS, JUST LIKE MOMO.
I EVEN HAVE A BABY.
WELCOME HOME, SUMIRE-CHAN.
UMM... I JUST WANTED TO HEAR YOUR VOICE, SO I'LL CALL AGAIN TOMORROW.
UMM...IF YOU COULD, PLEASE THINK ABOUT ME BEFORE YOU GO TO BED.
THEN, SEE YOU! GOOD NIGHT.
GIVING UP IS LOSING.
I DON'T WANT TO LOSE.

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MERCI.
HUH... OH.
YOU WERE GRINNING LIKE A FOOL AND TALKING IN YOUR SLEEP, YOU KNOW.
TAKESHI
YOU'LL CATCH A COLD IF YOU SLEEP THERE.
...IT'S REALLY JUST LIKE A DREAM...
I'M TOO HAPPY AND...
THIS KIND OF SEEMS LIKE A DREAM.
BAM BAM BAM BAM
?
AT LEAST I SHOULD HAVE FELT UP HER BOOBS!
SHIT! I WANTED TO EAT A MR. OCTOPUS HOT DOG BEFORE I WOKE UP!
WHAT? IT WAS A DREAM, HUH...
HUH?
MOMO'S... NOT HERE.
IT'S ONLY TWO AND A HALF HOURS BY EUROSTAR.
I COULD EVEN MAKE HIS MEALS FOR THE WHOLE WEEK AND FREEZE THEM...
SPRITZ

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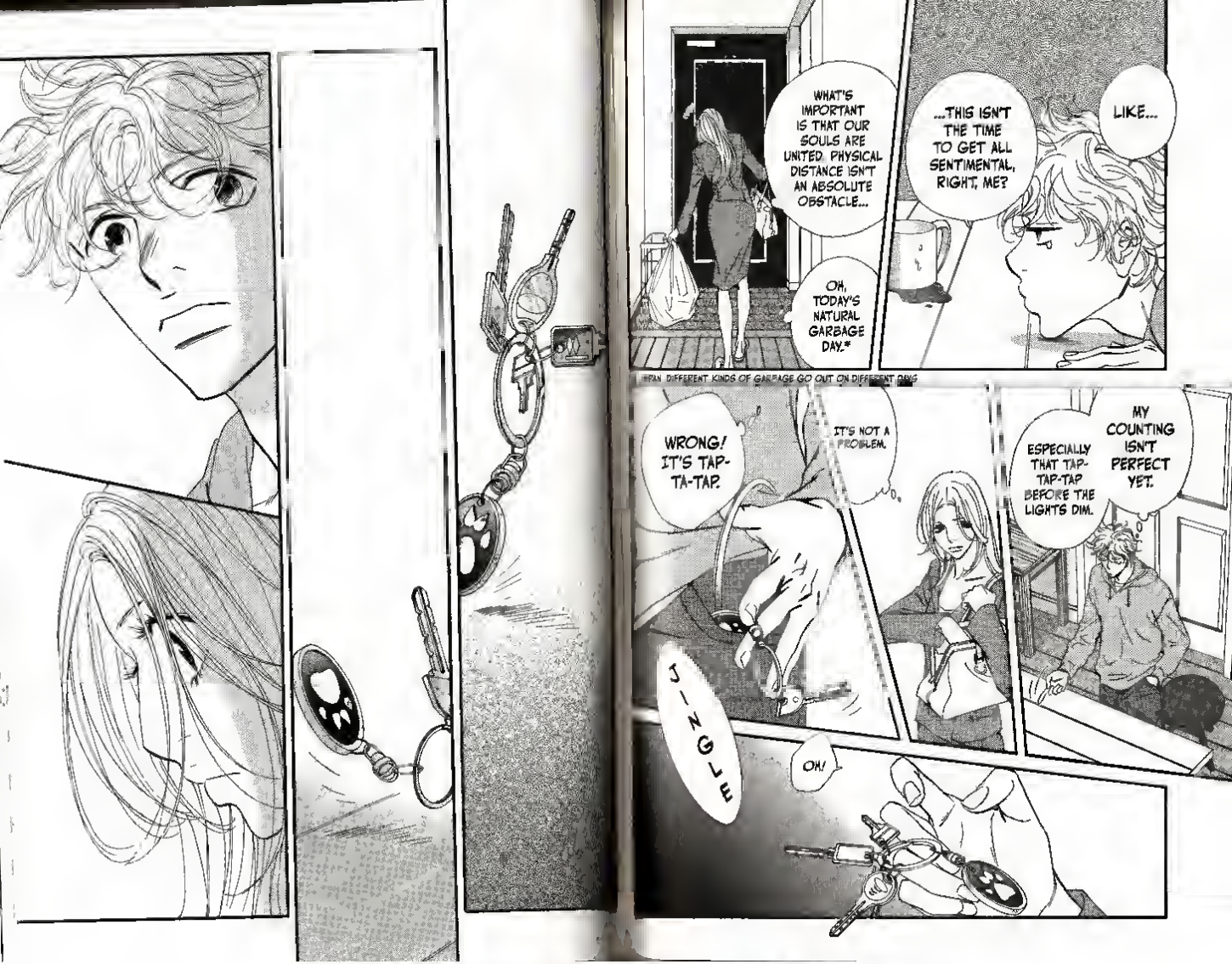
WHAT'S IMPORTANT IS THAT OUR SOULS ARE UNITED. PHYSICAL DISTANCE ISN'T AN ABSOLUTE OBSTACLE...
OH, TODAY'S NATURAL GARBAGE DAY.*
...THIS ISN'T THE TIME TO GET ALL SENTIMENTAL, RIGHT, ME?
LIKE...
*IRAN. DIFFERENT KINDS OF GARBAGE GO OUT ON DIFFERENT DAYS.
WRONG! IT'S TAP-TA-TAP.
IT'S NOT A PROBLEM.
ESPECIALLY THAT TAP-TAP-TAP BEFORE THE LIGHTS DIM.
MY COUNTING ISN'T PERFECT YET.
JINGLE
OH!

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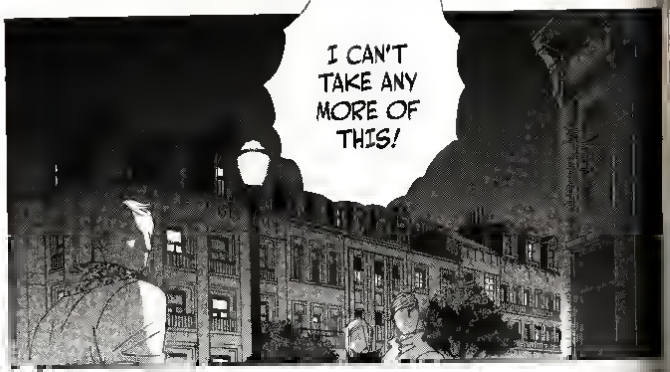

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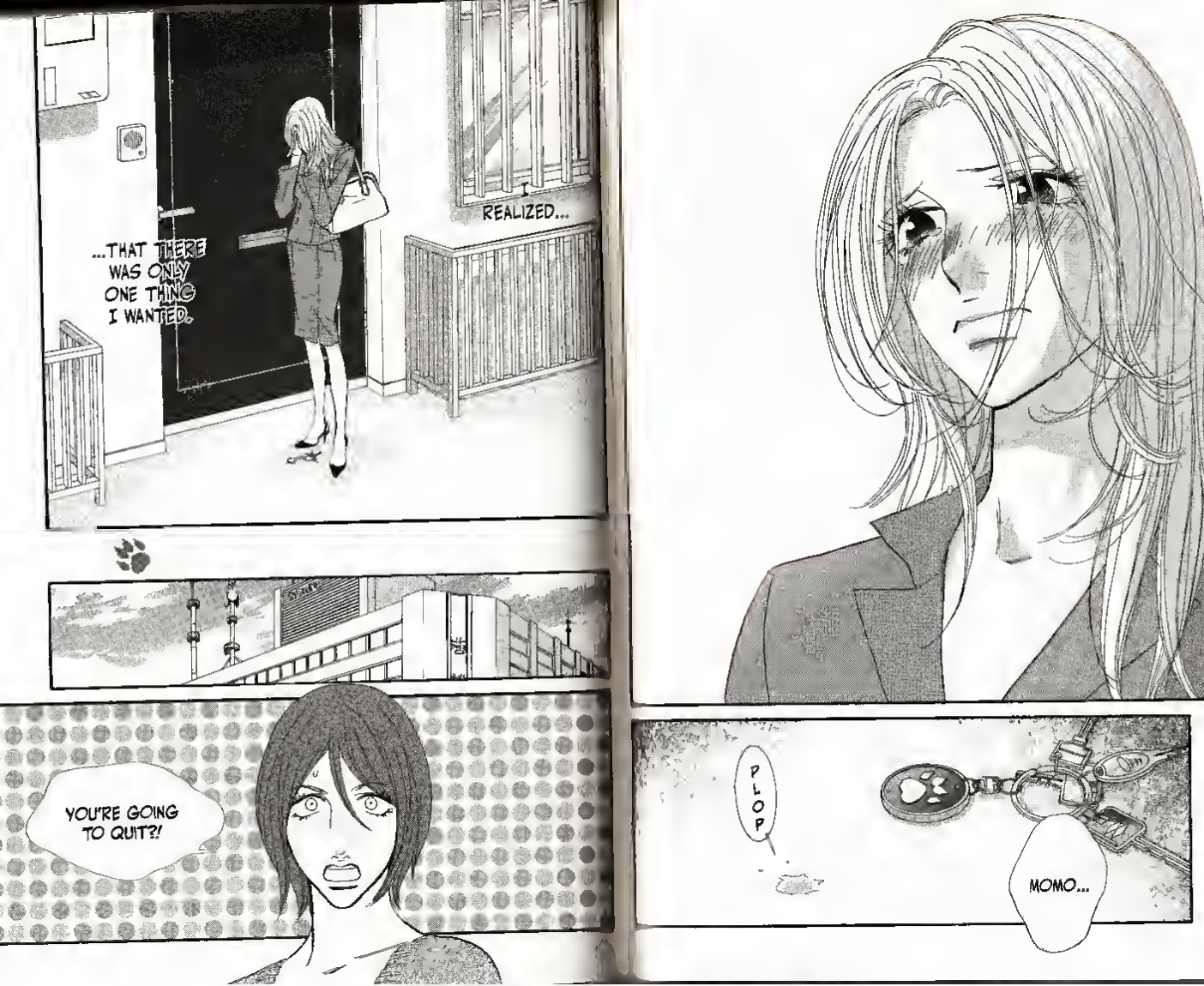

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IWAYA-KUN, DO YOU HAVE A MINUTE?
YES?
I HEAR YOU'RE GOING TO LIVE IN BELGIUM AFTER YOU QUIT.
UH... YES.
IF YOU'RE INTERESTED, HOW ABOUT WRITING REPORTS ON EUROPE FOR A YEAR?
THAT, AND THERE ARE ALSO OFFERS FROM LIFESTYLES DEPARTMENT AND THE SUNDAY EDITION.
I HOPE THERE WILL BE ENOUGH TIME.
THERE IS STILL A LOT OF WORK I NEED TO DO, AND I HAVE TO START GETTING THINGS READY FOR MY REPLACEMENT.
I CAN'T BELIEVE IT! YOU'RE GOING TO STAY LIKE THAT UNTIL THE END?
AT THE END OF THIS YEAR.
I AM STAYING IN THE ENGLISH-LANGUAGE NEWSPAPER DEPARTMENT UNTIL THEN.
IT IS STRANGE, ISN'T IT?
I USED TO THINK GIVING UP WAS LOSING...
...BUT I AM NOT THE LEAST BIT FRUSTRATED.
SO HOW ABOUT BECOMING HUGH'S COLLEAGUE AS A FREELANCE JOURNALIST?
IT SEEMS IF YOU'VE GOT A STORY, SOCIETY WILL WELCOME YOU, TOO.
IT'S PROBABLY BETTER IF YOU DON'T TELL SUKENARI.
HE'LL CRY, I BET
THAT'S TRUE.. IT MIGHT BE ANNOYING.
I'M ALREADY CRYING BUCKETS..
IF WHAT YOU GET IS WORTH IT TO YOU, THEN IT'S NOT LOSING, YOU KNOW?
AND YOU WON'T KNOW THAT UNTIL YOU GIVE IT UP

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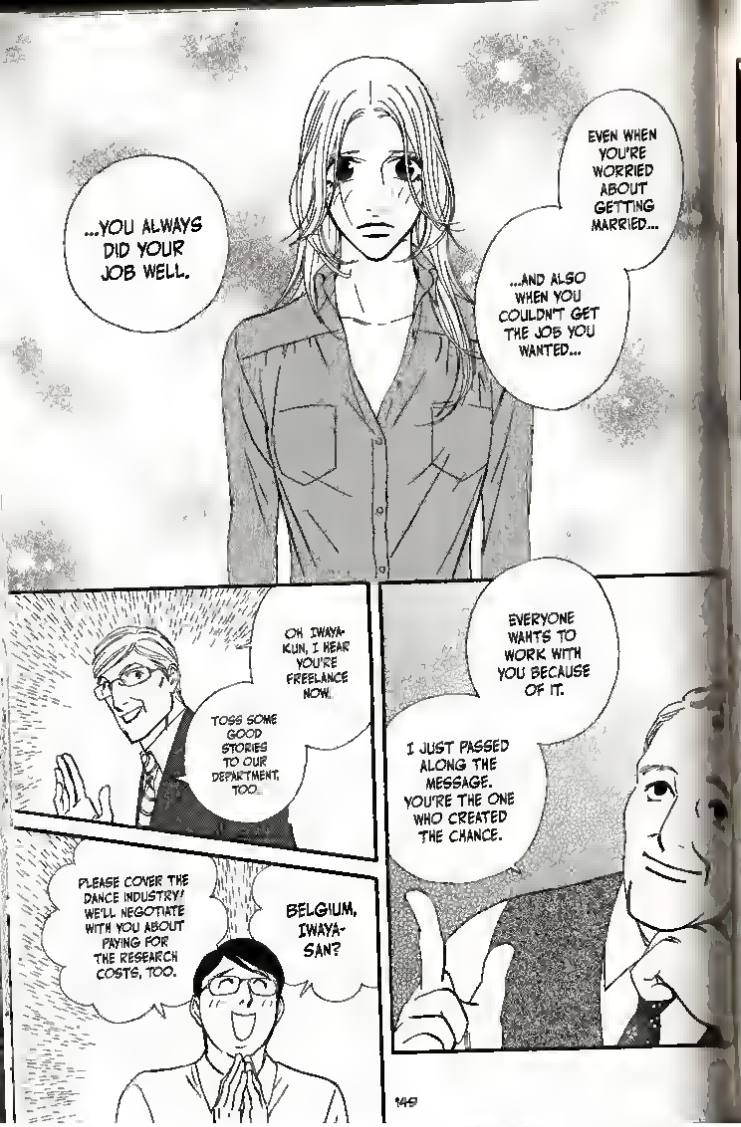
...YOU ALWAYS DID YOUR JOB WELL.
EVEN WHEN YOU'RE WORRIED ABOUT GETTING MARRIED...
...AND ALSO WHEN YOU COULDN'T GET THE JOB YOU WANTED...
OH, IWAYA-KUN, I HEAR YOU'RE FREELANCE NOW.
TOSS SOME GOOD STORIES TO OUR DEPARTMENT, TOO.
EVERYONE WANTS TO WORK WITH YOU BECAUSE OF IT.
I JUST PASSED ALONG THE MESSAGE. YOU'RE THE ONE WHO CREATED THE CHANCE.
PLEASE COVER THE DANCE INDUSTRY! WE'LL NEGOTIATE WITH YOU ABOUT PAYING FOR THE RESEARCH COSTS, TOO.
BELGIUM, IWAYA-SAN?

I REALLY LIKE THAT PLAYER.
YOU KNOW, HIS PLAYS DON'T GET SLOPPY, NO MATTER HOW BIG OF A LEAD HIS TEAM HAS.
SEE, HE JUST CAUGHT THE RUNNER TRYING TO STEAL A BASE.
D-DID YOU SET ALL THIS UP FOR ME?
OH, IWAYA-KUN, LOOK.
THAT'S GREAT TIMING FOR A HIT.
EXCUSE ME, KANEKO-SAN...
HOWEVER, TRULY GREAT PLAYERS GIVE THEIR ALL, 100 PERCENT OF THE TIME.
USUALLY PEOPLE GET CONCEITED WHEN THEY'RE WINNING, AND THEY DO BAD WORK WHEN THEY LOSE.
IWAYA-KUN, YOU'RE SOMEONE WHO CAN DO THAT, TOO.

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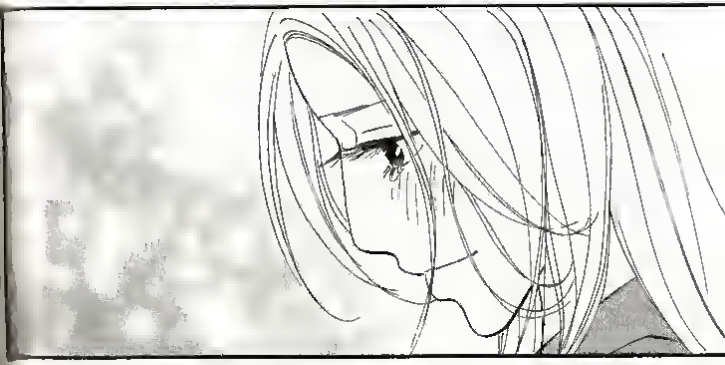
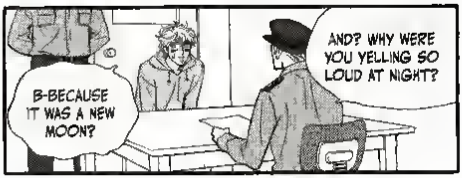


GIVING UP CAN BE WINNING... SOMETIMES IT JUST MEANS WINNING IS POSSIBLE.



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Scans By
SkitzoMartyr

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I KNOW THERE'S THAT..."YOU WILL NEED TO START USING THINGS LIKE THIS SOON, ALSO"... PRODUCT THAT BIG SISTER GAVE ME, SOMEWHERE AROUND HERE.
GOT IT!
IT'S EXPIRED BUT IT'S STILL SEALED, SO IT'S OKAY!!
WHAT NICE WEATHER!
MMM...
I HAVE TO PAY ATTENTION TO THIS ANTI-AGING STUFF FROM NOW ON!
IT'D BE HORRIBLE IF SOMEONE THOUGHT WE WERE PARENT AND CHILD WHEN I'M WITH MOMO...
MUST KEEP REFRIG-ERATED?!!
NOTE: SHE'S BEEN TALKING TO HERSELF THIS WHOLE TIME.
—IT KIND OF, SORT OF LOOKS LIKE MY SKIN'S DOING BETTER, TOO.
IT'S ONLY BEEN THREE DAYS BUT...
THE MORNING AIR IS REALLY DIFFERENT AFTER YOU QUIT SMOKING, ISN'T IT?!
HUH?!!!
THIS IS... IT CAN'T BE...
A WRINKLE?!
HOW EXCITING. YOU'LL GET TO SEE YOUR SWEETHEART FOR THE FIRST TIME IN A WHILE.

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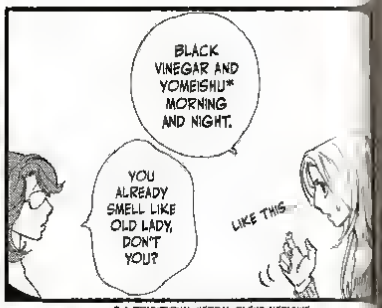
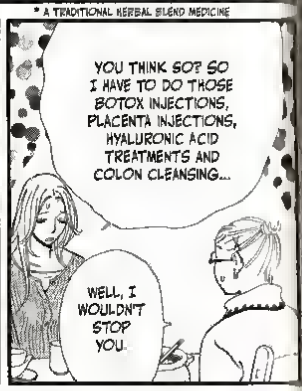
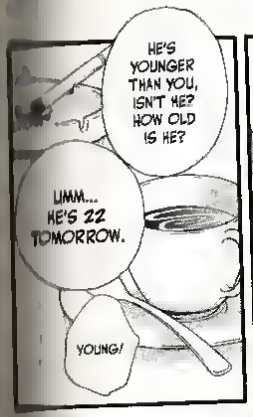


* A TRADITIONAL HERBAL BLEND MEDICINE

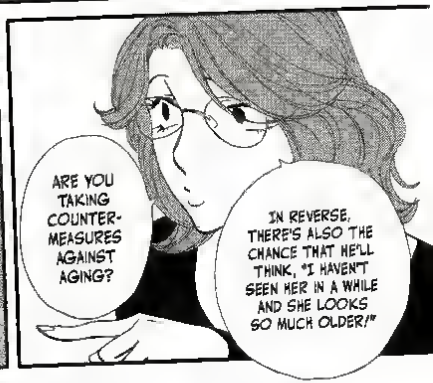
OH. I SEE. AFTER ALL, SHINICHI-SAN IS GONE A LOT, TOO, HUH?
THAT'S NOT IT, THOUGH. WHAT SHE MEANT WAS THAT THE LITTLE CHANGES YOU DON'T NOTICE WHEN YOU SEE EACH OTHER EVERY DAY ARE NOTICEABLE WHEN YOU HAVEN'T SEEN EACH OTHER IN A WHILE


YOU THINK SO? SO I HAVE TO DO THOSE BOTOX INJECTIONS, PLACENTA INJECTIONS, HYALURONIC ACID TREATMENTS AND COLON CLEANSING...
WELL, I WOULDN'T STOP YOU.

YEAH. I'LL ARRIVE ON THE LAST DAY OF THE PERFORMANCE AND STAY FOR THREE NIGHTS.
HOW LONG ARE YOU GOING FOR? YOU WERE GOING TO SEE THE DANCE RECITAL, RIGHT?
THE END-OF-YEAR PROMOTIONS ARE CLOSE AND I COULDN'T TAKE ANY MORE DAYS OFF.



THAT'S RIGHT MY LITTLE BROTHER KEEPS TURNING INTO AN OLDER MAN EVERY TIME I SEE HIM ON A TRIP HOME.
AT THAT AGE, HE MIGHT HAVE CHANGED A LOT, SINCE YOU HAVEN'T SEEN HIM IN FOUR MONTHS.
I SEE...


ARE YOU TAKING COUNTER-MEASURES AGAINST AGING?
IN REVERSE, THERE'S ALSO THE CHANCE THAT HE'LL THINK, "I HAVEN'T SEEN HER IN A WHILE AND SHE LOOKS SO MUCH OLDER!"

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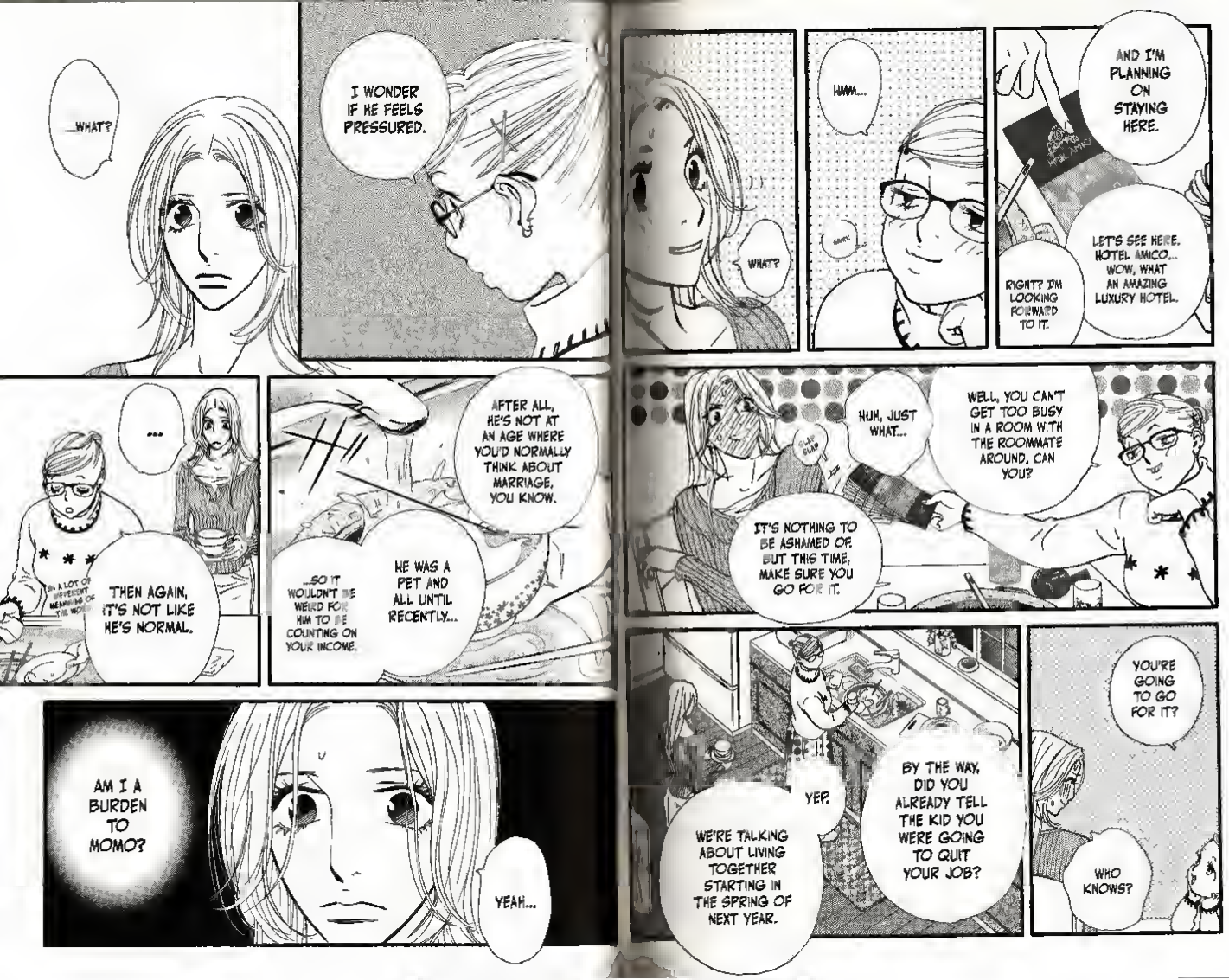
...WHAT?
I WONDER IF HE FEELS PRESSURED.
WHAT?
HMM...
AND I'M PLANNING ON STAYING HERE.
LET'S SEE HERE. HOTEL AMICO... WOW, WHAT AN AMAZING LUXURY HOTEL.
RIGHT? I'M LOOKING FORWARD TO IT.
...
THEN AGAIN, IT'S NOT LIKE HE'S NORMAL.
...SO IT WOULDN'T BE WEIRD FOR HIM TO BE COUNTING ON YOUR INCOME.
HE WAS A PET AND ALL UNTIL RECENTLY...
AFTER ALL, HE'S NOT AT AN AGE WHERE YOU'D NORMALLY THINK ABOUT MARRIAGE, YOU KNOW.
HUH, JUST WHAT...
WELL, YOU CAN'T GET TOO BUSY IN A ROOM WITH THE ROOMMATE AROUND, CAN YOU?
IT'S NOTHING TO BE ASHAMED OF. BUT THIS TIME, MAKE SURE YOU GO FOR IT.
AM I A BURDEN TO MOMO?
YEAH...
YEP.
WE'RE TALKING ABOUT LIVING TOGETHER STARTING IN THE SPRING OF NEXT YEAR.
BY THE WAY, DID YOU ALREADY TELL THE KID YOU WERE GOING TO QUIT YOUR JOB?
YOU'RE GOING TO GO FOR IT?
WHO KNOWS?

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I WONDER IF HE FEELS PRESSURED...
NOTHING... I'M JUST GLAD YOU'RE ALL RIGHT.
I REALLY LIKE IT!! I'M DEFINITELY GOING TO WEAR IT AT MY NEXT PERFORMANCE, OKAY?!
PENDANT
THE PRESENT CAME!
...LIKE YURI SAID. NORMALLY, IT WOULD BE ADDED PRESSURE, WOULDN'T IT?
AND THEN ME ON TOP OF IT ALL, AT A TIME LIKE THIS... IT'S DEFINITELY...
I'M SURE HE'S FULL OF UNCERTAINTIES ABOUT THE FUTURE...
MOMO'S JUST STARTED HEADING TOWARD HIS DREAMS!
LET'S MEET IN FRONT OF THE STATUE OF SERCLAES WHEN YOU ARRIVE.
WHAT'S THAT?
IT'S CLOSE TO THE HOTEL YOU'RE GOING TO STAY AT, TOO, SUMIRE-CHAN.
YOU WON'T BELIEVE IT! IF YOU TOUCH THE STATUE, YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO BECOME HAPPY.
THANKS, SUMIRE-CHAN.
YOU'RE WELCOME.
MAYBE... NO, I CAN'T THINK ABOUT THAT NOW.
I THOUGHT BEING BY HIS SIDE WAS SUPPORTING HIM, BUT...
I JUST WANT TO SEE YOU AS SOON AS POSSIBLE RIGHT NOW.
I'M SORRY, MOMO.
HIS HAIR HAS GROWN QUITE A BIT.
HOW'S YOUR HEALTH? THOSE SEIZURES AND STUFF.
HOW IS IT GOING?
WHAT'S WRONG? WHY ARE YOU SO WORRIED?
TOTALLY FINE. AND I HAVE MEDICINE JUST IN CASE, TOO.
SUMIRE-CHAN, MAKE SURE YOU DON'T GET LOST, EITHER, OKAY?
IT'LL BE FINE, FINE.
THERE'S AN AFTERNOON SHOW ON THE LAST DAY, SO AFTER THAT... HOW ABOUT THREE P.M.?
IS THAT GOING TO BE OKAY? MAYBE IT'D BE BETTER AFTER THE NIGHT SHOW'S OVER...
LIKE YOU SHOULD TALK?

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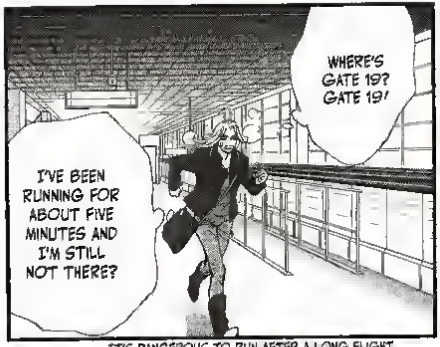
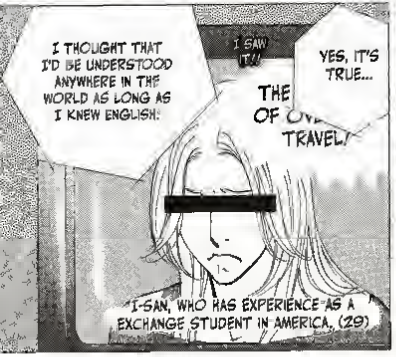
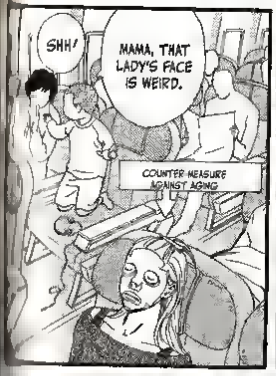
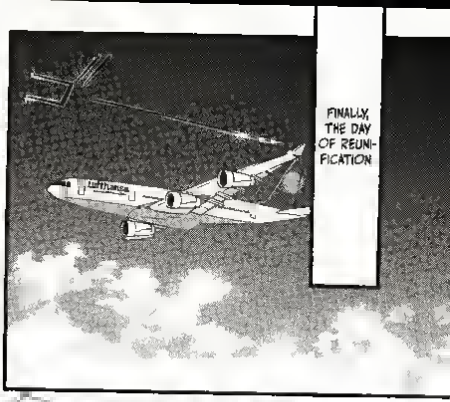


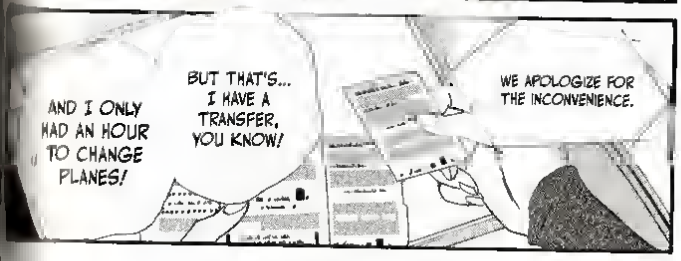
IT'S DANGEROUS TO RUN AFTER A LONG FLIGHT



I-SAN, WHO HAS EXPERIENCE AS A EXCHANGE STUDENT IN AMERICA, (29)







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MA'AM, WE FOUND IT!
I'M SORRY! I'M SORRY!
NO...THERE'S A SIMILAR ONE LEFT, SO...I THINK SOME IDIOT MUST HAVE MADE A MISTAKE...
I'LL LOOK INTO IT. PLEASE WAIT A MOMENT.
WHAT'S MA IS A FAILURE AS A HUMAN BEING?
IT'S OKAY. YOU ALWAYS DO THIS KIND OF THING, RIGHT?
REALLY! DON'T HAVE TIME. MUST TAKE TAXI!
YOU WERE RIGHT. SHE THOUGHT IT WAS HERS AND ACCIDENTALLY TOOK IT.
I'M SORRY! I'M REALLY SORRY!
THANKS...
...THIS ISN'T RIGHT.
FINALLY...
BECAUSE OF INCLEMENT WEATHER, OUR TAKEOFF HAS BEEN DELAYED. WE APOLOGIZE FOR THE INCONVENIENCE. PLEASE KEEP YOUR SEAT BELTS ON.
HEY!!!
THIS IS A NOTICE TO OUR PASSENGERS.
I MADE IT.
BUT DID THEY REALLY TRANSFER MY LUGGAGE CORRECTLY?
FINALLY...
...
THREE HOURS LATE!
ARRIVAL AT BRUSSELS AIRPORT
I WONDER IF I HAVE ENOUGH TIME TO CHANGE
YOUR BAGGAGE IS LOST?

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SHE DIDN'T GET LOST OR SOMETHING, DID SHE?
OKAY, SAY CHEESE!
EXCUSE ME, CAN YOU PLEASE TAKE OUR PICTURE?
UH, SURE.
JUICY, HONJYARARE? HONYURAPA? HONYARABUU?
(THIS IS WHAT IT SOUNDS LIKE TO SUMIRE)
...
QU'EST-CE QUE C'EST?
HUH?
ACCORDING TO THE GUIDE, IT SHOULD ONLY TAKE 20 MINUTES TO GET TO THE CITY...
EXCUSE ME. ARE WE THERE YET?
WE SHOULD ALREADY BE TOGETHER...
I WANT TO SEE HER SO BAD
TALK IN AN EARTH LANGUAGE! LET ME OUT RIGHT NOW!!
YOU! DON'T TRY TO TRICK ME WITH UNINTELLIGIBLE WORDS!
NO, NON!
SCARED BY A JAPANESE STRANGER WHO SUDDENLY SNAPS
SUMIRE-CHAN... IS SURE LATE.

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THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE.
MAYBE I REALLY AM A BURDEN TO MOMO NOW.
MAYBE IT'S BETTER IF I JUST DON'T SEE HIM ANYMORE...
...
AS IF HE'D STILL BE HERE...
AFTER ALL, IT'S ALMOST SIX.
AAH!
AAH!
AAH!
BUT...I CAN'T GO ON ANYMORE WITHOUT EATING OR DRINKING SOMETHING.
I'D BETTER HURRY OR I WON'T MAKE IT IN TIME FOR THE PERFORMANCE, EITHER.
BRING HAPPINESS INTO OUR FUTURE.
I DON'T BELIEVE THAT YOU CAN BECOME HAPPY BY JUST WISHING, BUT...
...BUT PLEASE.
BECAUSE I ONLY THOUGHT ABOUT MYSELF
I WONDER IF IT'S KARMA...
IF YOU TOUCH THE STATUE, YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO BECOME HAPPY.
EVERYONE REALLY DOES TOUCH IT.

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I BARELY MADE IT...
YOU'RE WORRIED, RIGHT? IF YOU KNOW HER SEAT NUMBER, I'LL GO LOOK.
NO, THAT'S ALL RIGHT.
SO YOU COULDN'T SEE HER AT ALL?
YEAH.
I KNOW SHE'LL COME.
HUH? HOW DO YOU KNOW?
OH.
I'M WATCHING, OKAY?
MOMO... I'M RIGHT HERE.
HMM...
MAYBE IT'S THAT PET'S INTUITION I'VE POLISHED UP OVER THE YEARS.

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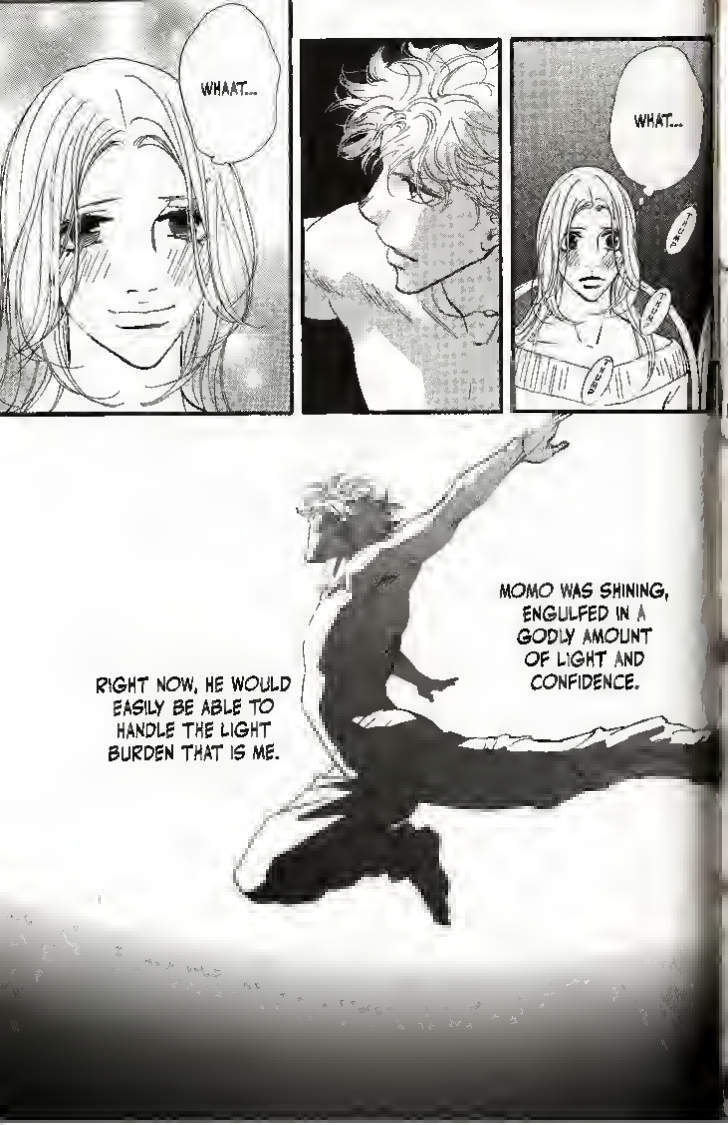
WHAAT...
WHAT...
GULP
MOMO WAS SHINING, ENGULFED IN A GODLY AMOUNT OF LIGHT AND CONFIDENCE.
RIGHT NOW, HE WOULD EASILY BE ABLE TO HANDLE THE LIGHT BURDEN THAT IS ME.

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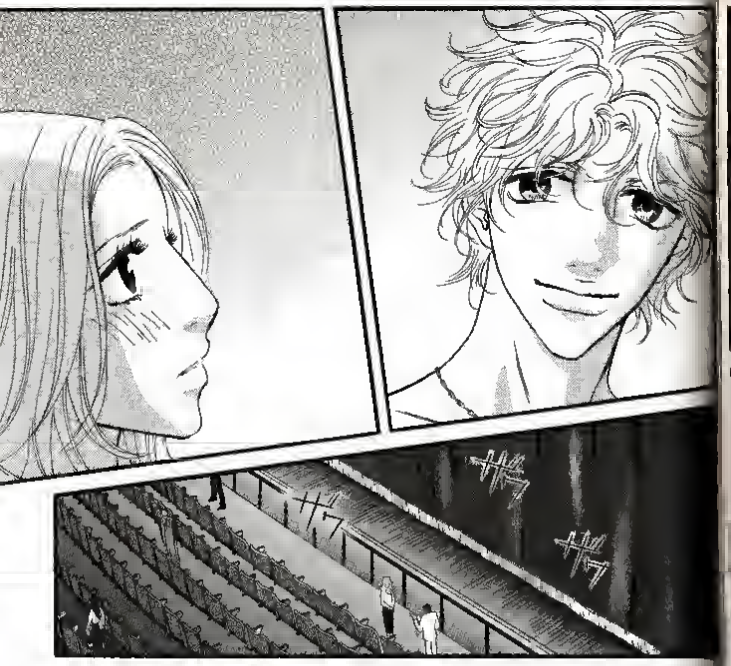

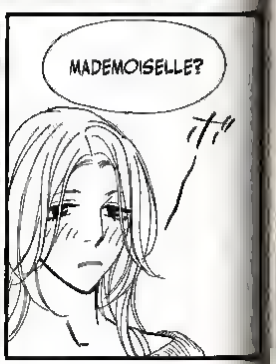

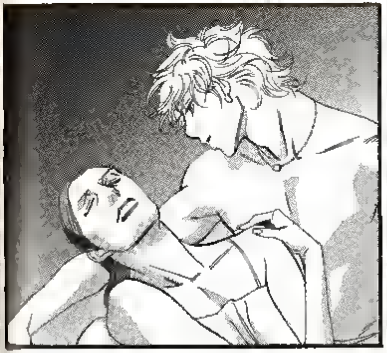

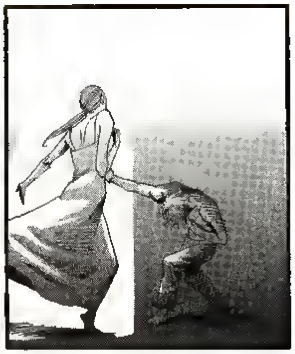

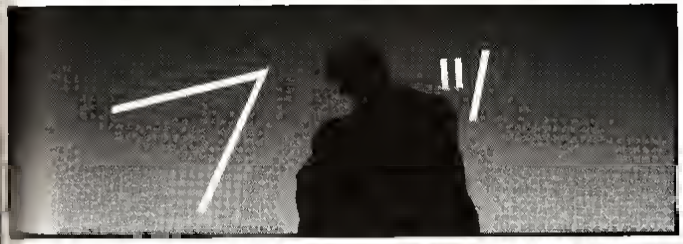

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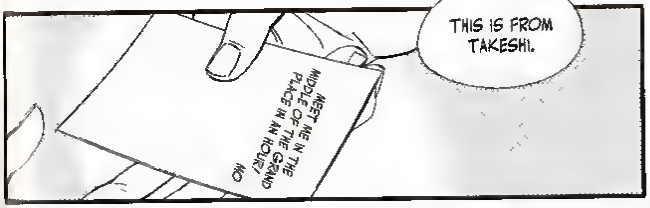

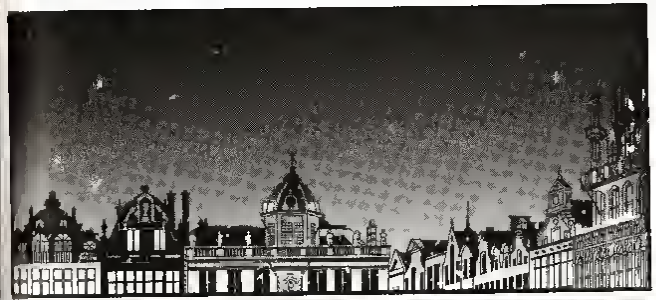

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LU LU LU...
EVERY TIME WE MAKE LOVE,
THE WORLD STOPS.
IN THIS WORLD WITHOUT TIME...
WE BOTH GO...
THE NIGHT DOESN'T PASS.
THE STARS DON'T DISAPPEAR.
ONLY THE SONG OF LOVE ECHOES.
TIME STOPS...
...FOR THOSE WHO ARE IN LOVE.
--FROM "YOAKE MAE NO SCAT," BY SAORI YUKI

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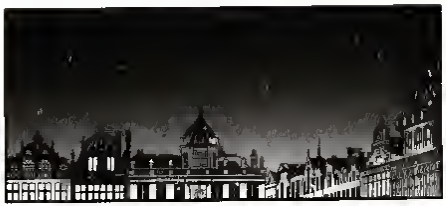

MAYBE A POST-PERFORMANCE MEETING?
THAT'S WHY I SAID WE SHOULDN'T GO ON THE LAST DAY.
I THOUGHT WE'D HAVE DINNER TOGETHER, BUT WHERE'D HE DISAPPEAR TO?

TO BE CONTINUED...

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SkitzoMartyr

thank you so much IceSea and SkitzoMartyr
thanks to you
two we were
all able to
finish reading
Kimi Wa Petto
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